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OF

WILLIAM A. PORTER, A. M.,

WITH

SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS.



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It may be proper to state that the following Memoir is not intended for publication and sale. It is designed solely for private circulation among relatives and acquaintances, who wish to preserve such a memorial of the character and Christian efforts of their departed friend.

MEMOIR.

THERE is reason to believe, that the spirits of good men possess some knowledge, after their departure, of what is done here by their former associates. If any such knowledge is allowed them, we must suppose it is accompanied by a lively interest in our condition and conduct. But the interest they take in our feelings and fortunes is, probably, not proportioned to the degree in which these affect us. They measure the relative importance of things by a higher and truer rule than we. Especially would it be unreasonable to suppose, that they regard our demonstrations of respect and affection now, in the same manner as when we and they were together engaged in the same round of duties and pleasures. Even before they were quite gone from us, we perceived their most anxious regards

directed to the world opening before them. Of the good, dying in the calm possession of their thoughts, it is eminently true, that this world recedes, as the next approaches.

Yet we must not imagine that our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, our toils and satisfactions, can be objects of contempt or indifference to them, merely because we have the weaknesses of humanity, and are often over anxious about things of little consequence. All good spirits must look with kind regard on us, who remain upon this scene of troubled and precarious existence—most of all must we be thus looked upon by those who have just escaped from it. But our sentiments respecting themselves must be among the least interesting objects of attention. In “the assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect,” they have found purer and higher joys than they shared with us here ; and, in the immediate presence of the source of all good, they experience delights unknown to them, while they saw “through a glass darkly.” It should be for our own benefit, therefore, rather than for any other purpose, that we set ourselves to the pleasing office of recounting the virtues of those who have “died in faith.” In the instance before us it will be useful, besides describing the ex-

cellencies of our departed friend, to attend to the history of his life, so far as to understand the influences under which his character was formed, and the means by which his intellectual and moral qualities were developed.

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS PORTER was the second son of the Rev. David Porter, D. D. of Catskill, N. Y. and was born at Spencertown, in Rensselaer county, where his father then resided, Oct. 3, 1798. His father soon after removed to Catskill, and in this village, William passed the period of early youth. In villages of such a size, it is no uncommon thing for boys to fall into irregular and disorderly habits. Parental care, found it easy, however, to keep him pure from all the contaminating influences to which he was exposed. Though possessing a full share of the activity which belongs to that age, he had a gentleness of temper that led him to decline and avoid its more violent and boisterous sports. He had nothing of the rash, reckless, and harsh temper too apt to predominate at that period.

His education was not hurried forward so early as the vanity or mistaken judgment of some parents leads them to push on children, in whom sprightliness is associated with docility, though it was by no means neg-

lected. He commenced the study of Latin pretty early ; and this, as well as his other studies preparatory to college, 'was prosecuted mostly at home, with the aid of his father's instructions. He entered Williams College a little before completing his sixteenth year.

During the spring term of his Freshman year, many of his fellow students became deeply anxious on the subject of religion, and several were apparently brought to repentance and newness of life. At the close of the term he returned home, and immediately made his father acquainted with his state of mind. Down to this time he had never shown any such interest in the truths of religion, as to attract the particular notice of his friends ; and now he first sought the sympathy and advice of his father. It is certainly uncommon in a youth, situated as he was, surrounded by many of his own age and of the same pursuits, by numbers too who were in a state of mind similar to his own, and, doubtless, much in the habit of free communication with each other, and with established Christians on the subject of religion, to see him hide his troubles in his own bosom, till he can find opportunity to pour them out where, more than in any other place on earth, his experience taught him to look for kind, faithful, and safe counsel and help. Before the

vacation closed, he found peace, as he hoped, in believing.

At the very outset of his religious course, the more prominent traits of his Christian character were the same which appeared most conspicuous in his conversation and conduct in the last hours of his life. He seemed more impressed with a sense of sin than of danger ; and even the period passed in anxious attention to the subject, before he felt authorized to take to himself the encouragements and promises of the gospel, was free from those agitating excitements, which are sometimes seen. And when he had, as he hoped, made the pearl of great price his own, there was nothing rapturous or extravagant in the exhibition of his feelings. If there was anything remarkable in the first manifestations of the divine life in him, it was the steadfastness of his views, the solid and firm persuasion of his judgment, and the constant and even tenor of his affections. It is not meant that at this time he gave any proofs of singular piety, or that the beginnings of holiness in him had anything peculiarly attractive ; at least to common observers. But the measure of grace he received produced in him the fruits of righteousness, if not in singular abundance, yet of uncommon soundness—such as to discerning eyes gave indication

of a future growth of great plenty and richness. In the winter following, he united himself to the church in Catskill, under the pastoral care of his father, and from that time if not earlier, he looked to the ministry of the gospel as his profession. His pursuits at college were from this time prosecuted with great industry and ardor. No part of the course of study prescribed there, was neglected from an opinion that it would be of no use to him in the line of life to which he was looking. He was indeed under less temptation to do so than many others, who are in the same stage of education at a later period of life. His own taste and judgment coincided with the advice of his father and the directions of his teachers.

It is impossible to conduct a youth through the stages of preparation for a creditable and successful performance of the duties of the ministry, at this day, without his acquiring a strong taste for some, often for many, of the branches of knowledge subsidiary to that preparation. He will learn not only to value them as auxiliaries, but to delight in them on their own account, as furnishing rich gratifications of his taste, and engrossing employment for his intellectual powers. Who, for instance, can attain to any such knowledge of the Greek language as is adequate to the able inter-

pretation of the New Testament, and not learn to admire the language itself, and the great masters of it with whom he necessarily becomes acquainted? What youthful mind can be disciplined and invigorated by a careful and thorough study of even the elementary branches of mathematics, and not learn to receive delight and the vigorous exercise of its powers, which is furnished in endless continuation by the various parts of this boundless science? or, who can bring his own style of writing and speaking to any desirable excellence, without acquiring meanwhile a lively relish for the great masters of elegant literature in our own language? It would be easy to show that it is a wise constitution of our nature that leads us to find a gratification of taste in the pursuit of qualifications for usefulness, and to justify in their indulgence of such tastes, even those who have devoted themselves most zealously to the service of religion. Especially are those who are training for the Christian ministry at this day to be justified and encouraged in so doing. For now a larger number than heretofore enter upon this training at a later period of life; and the condition and demands of the community leave the preacher less time than formerly for the cultivation of taste, or the enlargement of his knowledge, when once he has entered upon the active duties of his profession.

While at college Mr. Porter discovered a decided preference, however, for studies connected with our own, and with ancient languages and literature, and his taste and skill, both in writing and elocution, were deservedly admired. Some of his productions at this period would do credit to a riper age, and a later stage of education. He graduated in 1818, and appeared at commencement as the Valedictory Orator, an honor counted at his college among the first. In choosing for his subject "the Influence of Literature upon Moral Character," he took one which has been often handled, but which can never cease to interest intelligent and educated men, and which in his hands lacked neither freshness nor attraction.

He did not hesitate to make the ministry of the gospel the business of his life ; but his keen relish for literature ancient and modern, and especially his desire to make himself more largely acquainted with the former, led him to delay his professional studies. He determined to spend a year in pursuits more nearly related to those of the years he had just passed with so much gratification. But even this he intended to make subordinate to the higher aims of his future life. The better to do this, influenced also in part by personal respect, he spent some time at Albany with the Rev. John Dewitt, then pastor of a church in that

city. But the larger part of the year he spent at home ; not as many young men, who waste a considerable period after leaving college, from a feeling that they have escaped a long weary confinement, and are therefore entitled to a season of relaxation and amusement. By such an indulgence they often suffer an injury much greater than the loss of time. They lose the habit of regular employment and application ; and when they afterwards enter on professional studies, they do it with less satisfaction and less advantage than they would have done, when first released from the round of employments to which they have been formed by the discipline of a college. It was no happiness to him to have escaped from these engagements ; or, if there was anything in it grateful to him, it was the liberty it gave him to follow without interruption the studies he most loved.

At the end of the year he returned to college and entered upon the duties of a tutor, which he continued to perform for two years. The situation was a desirable one in his estimation, because it gave him opportunity to go over again, with riper judgment and easier step, some paths he had before traversed with pleasure.

But the office of a tutor in college has commonly

more of labor than pleasure ; or, rather, the pleasures of it are to be found, not so much in leisure for study, as in the faithful and successful discharge of the toilsome duties of instruction and government. Under the most favorable circumstances, the business of instruction is not suited to carry one forward with any gratifying rapidity. When a man, already imbued with a true love of learning, has committed to his hands a class of young men, all intelligent, docile, industrious, virtuous, and well taught in the previous parts of their course, he enjoys a good fortune, too rare indeed, but one which must furnish high and intense gratification to a benevolent mind. Yet even then, the necessity of patient and protracted attention to that which is already familiar, and the constant labors of correction and explanation must be sometimes irksome, and be felt as a clog by him who is all the while eager to push his own studies in the attractive fields, into which he feels he has but just entered. When to this are added the vexations arising from the dullness of some, the indolence of others, the want of preparation, of punctuality, of good temper, and of orderly habits, which are apt to be found, to some extent, in every promiscuous collection, the situation of an instructor appears less eligible. In-

deed, tutors, and those doing the duties of tutors in the colleges of this country, ought not to expect they shall find a large portion of leisure for their own pursuits. Such expectations they must learn to forego, or fall far short of the full measure of usefulness to which their station invites them. If ever there was a time when the duties of such a station could be faithfully performed without filling up the best part of nearly every day with useful attentions to their pupils, that time has gone by. Large demands are made on their time by what may be called the *administration* of college. The students who resort to our highest seminaries ought to be considered as having a just claim, not only to the public stated instructions of the lecture room, but also to all that can be done, in any way whatever, for the preservation of youth from vice or indolence, and for their advancement in virtue and knowledge. And until this is felt and made a rule of conduct, our public seminaries will not be the powerful instruments of good they might be, nor what they must and will ere long become, under the constraining influence of an enlightened public opinion. Personal attentions to the moral and intellectual improvement of the pupil, if bestowed with discretion and goodness, secure a title to his affection and respect, of more

efficacy in maintaining the peace and order of college, than all the pains and penalties of the strictest code.

Mr. Porter discharged the duties of his office with great fidelity and success. In the attempt to execute the plans of study he had formed before he learned by experience how little leisure he would have for such purposes, he found during the latter part of this time his health fast giving way. Perhaps also he was guilty of the "scholar's sin," of presuming on health while he neglected the means of preserving it. Few are taught without sad, and sometimes dangerous experience, the necessity of exercise to the student. It was with painful efforts that he continued to discharge the duties of the tutorship to the end of the two years. He was sometimes thought to be in danger from pulmonary complaints. But what was taken for indications of them, were probably but some of the effects of the besetting infirmity of scholars, a disordered stomach. His health after this seems never to have fully recovered its former tone.

On leaving the tutorship he took his Master's degree, on which occasion he delivered an oration, which he used to say was without a subject. Once when pressed to tell of what he was about to discourse, he replied in the words of the song, "Home, Children,

and Friends." It might, perhaps, with sufficient propriety have been inscribed "On Home," for he spoke of "home scenes and home attachments:" though not in the whole comprehension of those terms. "A Father's House" was the "Home" about which his heart lingered, and his imagination hovered. It was home, as contemplated by filial piety, that kindled his emotions and guided his pen.

The attachment to home he so cherished and inculcated, never appeared in him as a weakness. It was coupled with no pride of family, and no want of sufficient independence of thought and action. It was not *his* home of which he ever spoke. He must, indeed, have perceived that not every one had the same reasons with himself for valuing the benefits and dwelling on the delights a father's house supplies; but this was never apparent in his language or conduct. His own experience taught his heart: but he drew his sketches, as if he loved to believe that his felicity in this respect was not at all peculiar.

Nor did he dwell on such scenes merely as furnishing gratifications of the domestic affections. These affections he regarded as the purest and most delightful, which find their objects on earth. But he was ever contemplating their influence in a wider range, as

contributing to the production of the most valuable and lovely forms of human excellence, and furnishing helps in the cultivation of piety. In the best drawn of his "home scenes," the figure in the foreground is a parent giving instruction in the duties of piety, and saying, "Who knows but the Spirit of God may descend and strike out a heavenly note from the chord now strung in the young heart, and to remain unbroken even when every other part has become entirely insensible!"

In the fall of 1821, he became a member of the theological seminary at Andover, where he remained only about six months. His health was greatly impaired; and the summer following was passed in "deep depression" and debility, mostly at Catskill. Late in the season, with health much improved, he resumed his theological studies in the seminary at Princeton. In September of the next year, 1823, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Columbia Presbytery. His health while at Princeton remained imperfect, and he hoped, that, after becoming a preacher, he should be better able to vary his employments to suit his strength. He did not hurry forward to the pulpit from any impatience at the delay which a full course of professional study would occasion, nor because he did not

think such a course important, but only on account of the peculiar circumstances which in his case seemed to render it unattainable. For some months after his license he gave his stated but gratuitous assistance to a clergyman in the neighborhood of Catskill. The two years following he preached in different places almost without interruption on the Sabbath, and often during the week. In the summer of 1825, he was invited to preach at Burlington, Vt., as a candidate for settlement; and while preaching here, received the appointment of Professor of Languages in the University of Vermont. He was soon after elected to the same office in Williams College—it being intended to remove to another department the gentleman who previously filled that place. But Mr. Porter had accepted the invitation from the University, before receiving information of his appointment in his own College. He continued for nearly two years to hold this office; and in the latter part of 1826, he was married to Miss Mary A. Noble, daughter of Hon. Daniel Noble of Williamstown, Massachusetts. In 1827, he was called to the new Professorship of Moral Philosophy and Rhetoric, at Williams College, established by the aid of a liberal subscription of \$25,000, made to that institution the year preceding, and he accepted the appointment.

The studies and labors to which he was now called were suited to his taste, and a field of useful and honorable exertion was opened before him which he was well qualified to occupy. He entered upon it with great zeal and alacrity.

He now felt himself settled as to his course of life, and shaped his plans and his studies to the expectation of a long course of labor. It was right he should do so ; for, though such expectations are often disappointed, and the event showed that his course was to be a short one, yet our measures are ever to be so taken, that if life and activity are prolonged, we may not be found unprepared to do in the best manner whatever our hand shall find to do. But we are not for this purpose to withdraw ourselves at all from active labors, with the design of compensating our present unprofitableness by greater exertions at a future day. Death may intercept our plans. Most of all should an instructor live for the present, as well as for the future. He is to do this, because he owes a duty to those under his care, which he must pay now, or never ; and he cannot neglect it without irretrievable loss to them, and treachery to their guardians, who have intrusted them to his hands. Besides, experience constitutes the best part of the preparation to be made for future labors ; and without it, solitary

studies, however closely plied, would not furnish any results of much comparative value. Here, as elsewhere, experience must be joined largely to study, and it should be joined early, and joined constantly.

Accordingly, while Mr. Porter's plans of study were large, and such as should enter into a scheme requiring many years to fill it up, his immediate labors also were laid out on a large and liberal scale. He never set himself to ascertain how little would satisfy the statutes under which he held his situation, or the expectations of his class, or of his colleagues. Nor did he propose to limit himself to any established round of duties, nor indeed to any unchangeable plan of his own. Perhaps he attempted too much—not too much for the benefit of his pupils, nor more than was necessary to realize his own views of what was practicable, not to say necessary. He had repeatedly before, had painful proof that his physical system was very liable to be overdone, and to sink under the toils to which his zeal and industry subjected it. But he had in previous instances found relief, by relaxation, exercise, and temperance in food, and he trusted that by means of these he should be able to go through the tasks he had prescribed to himself. He attempted to regulate

his habits of exercise, food, and rest, not to suit the feebleness of a confirmed invalid, for of this there was no need; but with such exactness as his health required, and a situation so liable to interruptions allowed. The amount of time applicable to other purposes was much abridged by his endeavors to benefit his pupils by private, and as it might be called, unofficial conversation. Incidental opportunities for this were carefully laid hold of, and the important and salutary influence of it felt. If fit opportunities did not otherwise occur, he sought or made them.

His situation was very favorable to such plans of usefulness. Too little importance is often attached to the duties of the critic, by whatever official name he is known in different institutions, to whom are submitted the written productions of students in the maturer stages of their progress. It is a faulty, at least an unfortunate arrangement, that leaves him time only to consider and speak of their rhetorical character. The notice of rhetorical merits and defects would certainly make but a small part of the labors of an intelligent and faithful father, who should undertake the office of private tutor to his son. However much he might value style and expression, he could not fail to

attach a still higher value to the substance of what came under his correction ; and, without enumerating the particular objects of attention to such a critic, it cannot be doubted he would spend more time and feel more interest in correcting and enlarging his pupils' views and sentiments, than in shaping the expression of them. The same fullness of care cannot indeed be expected in a public seminary. It is impossible to do for each member of a numerous class, all which a private tutor might do for one or two individuals.

One of the greatest benefits that should be expected to accrue from the multiplication of teachers in our seminaries of the highest grades, both academical and professional, is, that it gives time and opportunity to bring the master and scholar more in contact with each other. The inspection of their written exercises furnishes one of the best occasions for this. They, through whose hands the more considerable of these exercises pass, have it in their power to exert an immense influence for good or evil, upon the sentiments and characters of the writers. To make this influence salutary in the highest practicable degree, there is required no common measure of knowledge, taste, benevolence, and patience, together with a just con-

ception of the high purposes to which these may be applied, and a deep feeling of responsibility for their faithful application.

Mr. Porter's exertions in his own department were eminently successful. He well understood, also, the relation of the arts of writing and elocution to the other parts of a liberal education; and, while he had for them the zeal and activity which it became him to show in his appropriate department, he took a lively interest in the success of every other, and readily co-operated in the measures necessary to it.

In the general administration of college, which is a much larger item in the duties of such an office than is often supposed, he was vigilant, decided, prudent, and conciliatory. His intimate knowledge of this subject, the growing interest he felt in it, and the assiduity with which he watched over it, caused his advice and assistance to be greatly valued by his colleagues.

In September, 1827, soon after entering on his Professorship at Williams College, he received ordination from the Presbytery of Columbia, by which he had been licensed. His heart seemed to be strongly drawn toward the ministry, and he found time, notwithstanding his numerous other engagements, to write

many sermons. He was one of the stated preachers in term time, to the congregation of which the students make a part, and frequently preached also in neighboring places—in the vacations he usually preached nearly every Sabbath. In the conduct of other religious meetings, he gave ready and liberal assistance. He was thus going forward in a course of honorable exertion and growing reputation and influence, both in his college course and in the other relations of society, and leading his friends and the public to entertain the most pleasing hopes; but these hopes were to be early disappointed. In the spring of 1830, he was attacked by an affection of the brain, attended with fever. The attack was not violent nor threatening. On the first day, though he felt himself indisposed, he did not give up to it; but, after some other engagements in the evening, sat down to the composition of a lecture, and applied himself severely till a late hour. The next morning he wrote a letter to his father. These were his last labors at college, to which he did not afterwards return from his house. But, though so ill as to remain at home, he did not, for a day or two more, call a physician. During the first eight or ten days of his sickness, he was not confined to his bed;

and at times, some relief seemed to have been procured. He was cheerful in his general manner, and received the visits of his friends, so as hardly to make them feel they were in a sick room. But his more reserved thoughts seem to have been much turned to the possible event of his illness. He once or twice, in this early part of his sickness, spoke of the designs of Providence in sending it ; but, finding the subject too painful to his family, he did not afterwards resume it. While yet so well as to walk about his chamber and sustain his part in conversation, he was visited by the Rev. Mr. Gridley, who happened to speak of the late death of the Rev. Mr. Christmas of New York, of which Mr. Porter had not before heard, and of that of the Rev. Mr. Bruen of the same city, which had occurred some months before. Both these excellent men were his personal acquaintance ; and Mr. Porter, after laboring awhile to suppress his emotions, broke out in loud sobs and a flood of tears, and was unable to regain his self-possession during the interview. This was the more surprising, as he was very little apt to exhibit such marks of feeling. Not even tears had been seen to escape him for some years by those most constantly about him.

The symptoms of his disease gradually became more violent and threatening, and considerable anxiety began to be felt for the result. But the hopes prevailed over the fears of his attendants, until three or four days before his death, when he desired a private interview with the father of Mrs. Porter, and expressed to him his conviction that the disease would terminate his life. He felt that though occasional alleviation of some symptoms had been experienced, the disease itself was unchecked ; and that he should soon sink under its power. He made full, and deliberate, and final communications respecting such temporal concerns as deserved his attention, with explicit and satisfactory declarations of his state of mind in prospect of his departure. From this time he spoke of his death as near, and addressed his friends as a dying man. The few days during which his strength yet bore up under the violence of disease, were days of intense anxiety to them ; but they gave opportunity for a most happy and interesting exhibition of the power and value of religion.

Two or three days before his death, the Rev. Mr. Gridley called on him at his request. Mr. G. having set down by his bedside, Mr. Porter himself began the conversation : " I am not able to say

much myself. I want you to talk to me as you would to a child; to begin at the foundation and tell me what are the evidences of a renewed state." Without waiting for a reply, he proceeded, "I am a great sinner, and have no dependence on my own righteousness, none at all. My only hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not wish to be saved but by Christ."

Being asked if he felt resigned to his condition, he said, "I hope I do. It has been hard for me to give up my friends, but I think I have done it, and I hope I can part with them. If I should recover, I do not know but the selfish principle would show itself, but I think it is not the reigning principle." At another time being asked, "Is Christ precious now?" he said, "O yes;" and then extending his arms, and showing by the expression of his countenance that his whole soul was moved, he proceeded, "I have no new presentiment of divine truth; but nothing can alter this one, that if I am saved, it must be by Christ alone. Take away this truth, and I have no hope—none at all."

At another time, addressing himself to several who were in the room, he said, "How shall I speak of salvation by Christ—salvation in Christ?—how pre-

cious, how glorious, how divine ! I have no language to express what it is."

The morning before his death he seemed to have an impression that he *might* yet recover ; or, at least, that his departure was not so near as he had before thought. Perhaps the effects of his disorder were such as to render him insensible of its progress. He called his physician and desired him to speak frankly of his case. Finding this impression unauthorized, he was silent for a few moments ; then tenderly embracing Mrs. P., he said, after some other remarks, "we must part ; I trust you to God—I give you up to God. I give Ellen" (his little daughter) "up to God."

To all the members of the family, not forgetting the youngest and the domestics, he gave his hand, and addressed a few words appropriate to their age and character. Some he comforted, reminding them of their Christian profession and hopes ; adding, "let us think of him who suffered for us. He is a precious, precious Saviour, an Almighty Saviour. I am willing it should be as God says."

To the brothers and sisters of Mrs. P., he spoke in language suited to their respective ages. To one, "firmly resolve that you will do all things in your power, and, God strengthening you, you may hope for

an interest in Christ." Another he reminded of having been lately with him in "extreme peril," from which they had mercifully been delivered. The servants he thanked for their kindness, and exhorted to repentance: "give your heart to God; O, give your heart to him." "I want you to love Christ more than anything else." He took leave of his associates in office with expressions of his satisfaction in their past connexion, and of his hope of being joined with them again hereafter. To a friend, whose opinions on some points of religion he thought erroneous, he made a kind and serious appeal, desiring him to look carefully into the subject.

Dr. Robbins, of Troy, had been sent for; but he arrived only three or four hours before his death, when it was too late to hope any benefit from medical skill. He expressed, however, his sense of Dr. R.'s kindness, and seemed to remember him as having been his tutor in College, and to refer to his goodness to him there.

Fearing that his parents, who were expected, would not arrive seasonably, he said, "If I should not see my father, tell him I can never repay him for what he has done for me;" and spoke of his singular obligations to him for exertions and sacrifices made

for his benefit. His mother being mentioned, he added, "I meant what I said for them both."

At the close of a short prayer by Mr. Gridley, in which he seemed to join, and at the close of which he said "Amen," he repeated these well known lines of Cowper:—

There is a fountain filled with blood
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
 And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
 Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
 That fountain in his day,
 And there may I, as vile as he,
 Wash all my guilt away.

He seems not to have been without some seasons of painful doubt. At one time, calling Mr. G. to his bedside, he said, "After all, Mr. Gridley, I *may* go to *hell*. It would be just if God should send me there; for my sins are great, very great. I know my sins are greatly aggravated; and even since I began to preach the gospel, my sins have been so great that I deserve it." But some time after, being asked "How does the way of salvation

appear to you now?" he replied, "More and more precious."

During the last day or two of his life, he repeatedly expressed a wish that he might be more alone. The intervals of reason and activity grew at length less frequent, and hardly returned at all during the last few hours, during which he seemed little sensible of what was passing around him.

What lucid moments the internal powers may enjoy, after the external manifestations of them cease, we cannot know. Nor is it important that we should. And if, as is probably more often the case, the faculties of the soul are clogged, and their activity suspended, from its connection with a bodily frame in the agonies of dissolution, ought we to be distressed by it? It may often be a merciful arrangement. In this instance, the dying saint was not long left in this affecting condition. He fell asleep just after the going down of the sun, April 2, 1830, at the age of 31 years and six months.

It is sometimes thought unsuitable for us to express, or form, any wish respecting the manner of our removal; especially, whether it shall be by a sudden stroke, or produced by means more gradual

and apparent. But it cannot be amiss to notice the incidental benefit, which is seen to result, when, as in this instance, the Christian from the pillow of death shows what a victory faith can achieve over death and the grave. The death-bed of an elegant scholar, a man of polite accomplishments, familiar with what is most attractive in ancient and modern learning, who had studied it with industry and a lively relish of its beauties, a student devoted by his profession to the study of human relations, and human duties as deduced from the observation of our actual condition, and our physical capacities, as well as from the revelations of the Scriptures,—the death-bed of such a man may be thought worth the attention of some, who would pass unheeded that of the ignorant and uncultivated. The world of imagination, in which he had expatiated with delight, the walks of philosophy which he had explored with careful toil, were now all forsaken. The Bible and its revelations were the only realities. These filled his eye, excited his reverence, and were the resting place of his well assured hope. His conduct and his language now showed, that to whatever other means of knowledge and sources of intellectual gratification he had occasionally resorted, he came

back to sit at the feet of Jesus, and valued the lessons he received there more than all that human wisdom could furnish.

Such an exhibition of the power of the gospel is of great value to survivors, and we are bound to call it a kind appointment of Providence that so ordered his times, as to give opportunity for it. While thus grateful for such testimonies in favor of evangelical religion, it is not for us to presume that, under like circumstances, *we* should exhibit the same edifying example; and, therefore, we should not be too desirous of the opportunity.

When a wish for a gradual and not unforeseen approach to the grave is either expressed or entertained, it is, doubtless, more often for the sake of the opportunity supposed to be thus furnished for preparation for the event. The desire that our "last illness" may be a protracted one, is commonly connected with two erroneous impressions;—*one* respecting the ability of a sick man to attend to so important a subject; the *other* respecting the need of spiritual aid to make sickness and pain, and even the near prospect of death, available as helps to repentance in the sinner, or sanctification and assurance in the Christian. They, at least, who neglect

any present means, or forego any present activity, in anticipation of the leisure and the motives of a death-bed, will be pretty sure to experience a disappointment. When such circumstances are seen to bring out the Christian graces in any singular distinctness and beauty, it will commonly be found these graces had been assiduously cultivated in health. So it had been in this instance.

Mr. Porter was not in the habit of writing down the state of his religious affections and views in the form of a diary; or, if he ever did so, he carefully destroyed it. Nor, indeed, did he often speak of them much at large in his letters, or in conversation, and the state of his heart at different times is to be gathered, for the most part, from less direct sources. He was sometimes liable to depression of spirits, especially when his health suffered; and during the summer in which his theological studies were suspended, he is stated by his father to have been in a state of *deep* depression. Such a state of mind often leads men to record their fears and perplexities, and also their brighter views.

It is not known, however, that he was prone to religious melancholy, or that he experienced great fluctuations of religious feeling. On the contrary, it

is believed that his views and affections on this subject, were more uninterrupted and even, than those of most Christians. In health and in seasons of religious enjoyment his emotions were not violent ; nor in speaking of religion in its most practical bearings, did he ever run into any extravagance of expression. He did not experience raptures : he did not look for them, and was not distressed that he did not feel them. He did not labor to excite them in others. But he did not condemn them as signs of error, or proofs of a false zeal, or mistaken experience. He was in this respect as in others, truly catholic, and able and ready to co-operate in labors for the promotion of piety with others whose religion showed itself in a more or less prominent connexion with the passions.

Some of his views of Christian experience are thus stated in a letter written by him to a young friend in 1827.

“Your letter gave me sincere pleasure by informing me that your thoughts have of late been more particularly turned to the subject of religion. In this view you have been in my thoughts not a little the past week. I have felt that my heart was full, but on sitting down to write, I hardly know what to say.

You are surrounded by much more able advisers than I am, and all I can do (perhaps even that may not be quite in vain) is to convince you I take an interest in your present circumstances. I do wish you may now, in Christ's strength, take up the determination to serve God, and decidedly act upon it—and, if feeling one's own deficiency, and lamenting one's own mistakes, make a good adviser, I, perhaps, may serve you.

“A common error in the case of young and sanguine persons, when they first take a strong interest in religion, is to anticipate too much present enjoyment. They may have heard much, and have, perhaps, felt something, of joy springing from new views, of God and his Son, and come to think that this measures piety, or, rather is its very essence. Hence much disappointment, and, in consequence of the disappointment, a falling off of interest in religion. The fact is, God does not propose it as the leading object of his dispensations towards his children in this world *to make them happy*. They must often, if they do their duty, go on serving him with sadness of heart. To relax in their exertions because there is not peace and joy within, shows something wrong at heart. *Our duty* is exhibited in the Scriptures—we should *do* it,

leaving it to God to determine how much it is proper for us to enjoy. He does indeed give his children 'bread to eat that the world knows not of.' Happiness in this world is not *essential* to them—sanctification *is*. And what if in distresses and trials most is done to strengthen and confirm faith, and love, and Christian hope?—should we shrink from them? If we are Christians indeed, eternity will be long enough for enjoyment. Here our characters are to be formed amid temptation and sorrows."

It was not to be expected of a man entertaining such views as these, that great and sudden variations of religious feeling would appear in him. But in Mr. Porter, there was an obvious progress in the leading qualities of the Christian. This was noticed and spoken of with great satisfaction by his friends, during the last years of his life. It was apparent also in his preaching. His discourses bore marks of increasing seriousness and zeal, and he sought opportunities of usefulness with increasing watchfulness. His conversation with his intimate friends, though it turned very rarely on his own state of mind, indicated a growing interest in practical godliness, and his contributions, and his exertions, were

bestowed with increasing liberality on the great enterprises of Christian charity.

The probability of his own early removal, seems to have been much in his thoughts for some time previous to his illness. This appeared in his conversation, and explains his frequent recurrence to the subject of death in his public discourses. One of his latest sermons was from the passage: Job, xiv. 14,—“All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.” The last discourse he prepared and preached, was, on “Dying in Faith,” from Heb. xi. 13,—“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers on the earth.”

“There is much reason to believe,” says a near friend, “that he was expecting shortly to go hence. In one of his letters to me, written early in the winter, he seemed to be endeavoring to prepare me for some heavy trial, in so direct a manner as to make a deep impression at the time.” A loose leaf lying among his papers, so as to make it probable it was the last thing he penned of this kind, contained some reflections on the words of the prophet to

Hezekiah, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

It is not supposed that there was anything in these impressions that can be distinctly traced to any divine intimation. Doubtless, many have their thoughts, for a length of time, much turned to the subject of death, to whom, however, it does not prove to be near—and they may have profited largely by such reflections. Yet it must be deemed a happy circumstance, and one for which acknowledgment may properly be made, as for a kindness from above, when he who finds himself about to leave the world, has been, in some measure, prepared for that event, by having recently meditated much upon it. He seemed to be answered in the prayer with which he closed his last sermon, some time before his illness commenced, "Will the Saviour be with us to calm and sustain and to receive our departing spirits? I pray God it may be so! I pray God we may die in faith! that, when we are absent from the body, we may be present with the Lord!"

He felt, also, what he much dwelt upon in the same discourse, "precious consolations for surviving friends." These consolations were signally needed by survivors.

The College in which he taught, sustained a severe loss in this afflicting event. His native talents, and his various acquisitions, made him an ornament and a blessing to the Institution. His good taste, his undissembled piety, his honorable and manly sentiments, evinced, in all his intercourse with others, his nice attention to all the proprieties of life, the ease and dignity of his manners, along with which may be mentioned here without impropriety, a fine voice and person, gave him so many titles to respect and affection, and authorized the high hopes entertained of him.

The Senior class, to which most of his labors were at that time given, testified their respect for him, and their sympathy with his family, by procuring a portrait of him, to be executed by a skilful young artist, Mr. Williams, of Pittsfield, who happened to be within such a distance that his services could be employed. A highly finished likeness, executed with great success, considering the difficulties of the attempt, was presented to Mrs. Porter by the class.

The removal of such men at so early a period of life has ever been regarded as one of the most mysterious things in the dispensations of an all-wise Providence. We are apt to feel as if they had lived in

vain ; as if the fruits of a long period of study, and of a profuse expenditure of parental labor and watchfulness, were lost. We are too apt to think thus.

But he has not lived in vain. It is not in vain that such an example has been set before us. The success and honor with which the anxious cares of parents and his own industry and virtue were crowned, constitute a ground of encouragement, both to parents and children, which cannot be lost on any who look upon it. And if the hands of parents were employed with more care and skill, in fashioning the minds, the habits, and the manners of their sons, whom they wish to see eminently good and great, we should see more frequent examples of the union of talents, elegance, and virtue. And if sons would more assiduously and faithfully endeavor to profit by the wisdom and affection of parents and teachers, and by the means of improvement falling within their reach through all the early period of life, how many brilliant examples of success should we witness !

There must be in the first place indeed native talents bestowed by the Creator ; else human culture, with whatever skill and fidelity applied, can never produce any excellence of a high order. But this culture is wanting much more often than the native

endowments, which are necessary to its success. The subject of this notice derived his distinguished worth, quite as much from the judicious care and discipline that fostered and trained his youthful mind, and from his own well directed and persevering exertions in maturer years, as from any original difference between him and many others, whom he so far outstripped. There was, perhaps, nothing very striking in his original constitution of mind. It was indeed a fair sample from the plenteous store of human minds. When the material came to be worked, it proved to be of a finer and stronger texture than at first appeared ; and all the skill and labor bestowed on it, showed more and more its soundness and intrinsic value. An intelligent friend, whose opportunities of knowing him, down to a short period before his death, were better than those of any other person out of the circle of his family, writes thus of him. "In many respects the character of his mind was of a high order, and it seemed to me that during the last two or three years of our acquaintance, his powers were developed to a remarkable degree. The enlargement of his views, the increasing elevation of his tone of thought, and, if it do not seem presumptuous in me to say it, I would add, the loftier and more spiritual character of his piety, were often subjects of my thought."

In making up a general estimate of the character of most who are called men of talents, we are obliged to make large deductions on account of some great defect. Often we find such blemishes and positive faults, as almost outweigh their talents and merits; sometimes almost preventing their usefulness, and still more frequently forbidding our respect and affection.

Indeed, men of talents seem often to think they are privileged to indulge themselves in some weaknesses, and justified in some pretensions injurious to others. When this proceeds from vanity and love of superiority, it is odious; when from the frugality of nature, who, while she bestows some qualities generously, dispenses with a sparing hand others not less necessary to make up the entireness of a great man, we must be content with the allotment, and endeavor to profit by what is given.

But in most cases the faults of men of genius are to be charged to them, much more than to nature. And there are not wanting examples of men most eminently endowed, and most highly distinguished and admired in some one particular department of human study or art, who have at the same time been alike amiable and prudent in all the common relations and duties of life. Such examples will be more fre-

quent, when parents and instructors become more wise and faithful, and the public more just and discerning. It should be added that a supposed, much oftener than a real, superiority of talents gives rise to the faults here referred to.

The experience of the past does not lead us to expect that many will be found following the steps of Prof. Porter with entire success. But his example is not one of those alluded to by the poet, "*Decipit exemplar imitabile vitiis.*" His character was not so much distinguished by any one brilliant and dazzling quality, as by a happy grouping and balance of all those necessary to produce affection, confidence, and usefulness. His course of life had nothing in it so peculiar as to prevent its being a useful study to every scholar. One of the ancients declared he preferred his own dead son to the living sons of others less virtuous. A heathen could say this, to whom futurity was a blank, or, at least, a great uncertainty. How much more may a Christian parent rejoice, even while standing beside the lifeless remains of a son, in whom he has seen well fulfilled all the fond hopes that prompted and encouraged his labors, sacrifices, and prayers. He knows that another world has received him. He may, therefore, not only cherish

the memory of deceased worth with a lively satisfaction, but, with immensely higher delight, indulge the confidence that all the virtues he doated on here, shine brighter still in a brighter world, and all the talents here so successfully developed, find there an adequate and more delightful employment.

Nor is it for others to feel that he is entirely lost to the interests of learning and religion. Many a youth will continue to feel he owes much to his able and zealous teaching, and will be invited and encouraged by his example to pursue with industry and animation a like honorable course. Those who never enjoyed his instructions may share this benefit. Even the bitter regrets of his bereaved friends, and the sad testimonies of respect paid by all who knew him, are suited to rouse the minds of ingenuous youth to honorable attempts at imitation.

There are some other important ends answered by the removal of such men in early life. Examples, oft recurring examples, of this kind, seem necessary to make such men sensible that they enjoy no exemption from the common lot, no security from death, on account of their talents, or virtue, or usefulness. They need thus to be taught, what they could hardly otherwise be taught, properly to feel, that they are

not so necessary to the execution of the merciful designs of heaven as they might be tempted to think ; that it is not allowed them to postpone the cultivation of any Christian graces ; and that to them as well as others the injunction applies, “ whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for in the grave whither thou goest there is no work.” Some of the fairest and most valuable traits of character in men of this description, could not be formed and preserved, but by the aid of motives supplied at such a cost.

With all these and many other reasons for submission to this dispensation, it is still with sorrow and lasting regret that the friends of Mr. Porter will ever cherish the memory of his virtues.

The foregoing notes on the Life of Prof. Porter, were prepared in compliance with the wishes of some of his literary friends. Several of them having expressed a wish to possess themselves of some further and better memorial of him, the writer has ventured to send to press the following Discourses to enable them to do so.

They appear, of course, under great disadvantages. None of them seem to have been ever re-written :

some of them had not even the corrections rendered necessary by haste of the hand. In revising them the author would, doubtless, often have changed a word, or abridged a paragraph. But it has been thought proper to print them as they are, since the object has been to furnish his friends with a relic of one they loved, and not to seek for his name a reputation with the public, which cannot follow him where he now is, and which he never coveted while here.

In making the selection, considerable difficulty has been experienced. The sermon on "Dying in Faith" was recommended by its subject, and also by the circumstance that it was the last one he preached. That on "Waiting for Death" was also one of his latest discourses, and so possesses more interest with those who heard it. That on "Chorazin and Bethsaida" was the last written by him, and was never delivered. The reasons for including the lecture on the "Domestic Relations" may be gathered from the preceding pages.

The writer will be happy if in what he has done he has ministered to the gratification of Mr. Porter's numerous acquaintance, as much as to his own while employed in this duty.

LECTURE.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS.

NEXT to the duties we owe our God, it is proper to consider those of which our fellow men are the object. These are as really duties to God, as the others, though not precisely in the same way. He is to be recognized in the whole compass of our conduct, and his laws to be taken as the rule. There are duties however, which find their immediate object in our fellow men; and owing to the many and various relations we sustain in a state of society, this field becomes exceedingly wide. To our whole species we owe at least the tribute of good wishes. That man fails of performing a manifest duty, who does not desire accessions to the happiness of others, and who does not feel for their woes though he may never have known them. Whenever again one of the human family, who needs our aid, is brought within the reach of our active benevolence, and we can relieve him, we come at once under an obligation to extend a helping hand. This truth is beautifully illustrated by our Saviour in the parable of the Samaritan. He teaches us that our sympathies

and kind attentions should not be limited to countrymen and friends and kindred, but should go as far as our ability to soothe and relieve the distressed. Without intending in the least to call in question those principles of expansive benevolence, I venture to say that the field of active duty for most persons is limited. For a general rule, our obligations to others are numerous and palpable in proportion to the closeness of their connexion with us. My object at present is to consider the domestic relations, and some of the duties which spring from them.

That is a most beautiful and benevolent arrangement of the Almighty, which, upon our entrance into the world, places us among those who are instantly prompted to love us, and to whom we, as soon as able, are disposed to yield the tribute of our affection. The infant is effectually provided for by God—not by being brought into the world with intelligence and strength sufficient to provide food and clothing for itself—but by being folded in the arms of maternal affection. This little image of helplessness, which, if left to itself, would have fallen to the earth and perished, is protected from every evil against which the most assiduous care can guard. These necessary attentions, not the result of constraint, but springing from deep, ever active, overflowing love, are continued till the development of his own powers gradually admits of their being dispensed with.

While the parent yields to the impulse of affection, and prompted *by this alone*, protects and cares for his child, we see the operation of divine wisdom, which constituted man such as he is; rather than that of virtuous principle in him. There is properly no virtue in feeling the attachments which are natural to us, sinful and abominable as

it would be to rid our hearts of them. They exist in the brute creation, the very nature of which excludes the ideas of virtue and vice. That would undoubtedly be a most exceptionable parent, who should have no rule of conduct in reference to his child but the promptings of instinctive affection. Natural affection requires to be under the control of reason, and if a sense of duty do not come in to correct its excesses and regulate its operation, the child will be, to no small extent, a sufferer. The parent then has *duties* to perform—and these oftentimes of a disagreeable character. I mean in individual instances; if he act in accordance with what he soberly esteems for the good of his child, violence will be done to his natural feelings. The feelings and reason should go on, in their operation, together, the province of the latter being always that of control. One reason why principle is so necessary, is the fact that natural affection does not operate with steadiness. Nothing in fact is less to be calculated on, than the conduct of a parent at once fond and uninfluenced by considerations of duty and ultimate advantage to his child. According to the humor of the moment, at one time there will be the most improper compliances, and at another apparent want of kindness and perhaps bursts of anger. The child will be caressed or spurned away, according as events with which he has nothing to do, may have produced an agreeable or disagreeable state of feeling. No one can doubt that the mother of Cowper was a woman of principle as well as tenderness. When having enumerated her many acts of kindness, he proceeds—

“All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne’er roughened by those cataracts and breaks
Which humor interposed too often makes.”

While, then, the natural affections indicate the benevolence of God, who planted them in our bosoms—while their operation is alike important and productive of happiness, and while the expulsion of them from the heart would make a monster, they are not to be obeyed without thought, and reflection, and principle.

Paley has distinguished the duties of the parent into those of maintenance, education, and a reasonable provision for the child's happiness in respect to outward condition. His remarks under these several heads are in general of unquestionable correctness. That the child should be maintained by the parents, while unable to provide for itself, is so clearly indicated by its circumstances, and the whole course of nature, as perhaps never to have been called in question. His duty in respect to education, referring in this word to what is physical, intellectual, and moral, is but imperfectly apprehended, and feebly felt, except in civilized countries, and where the light of revelation is enjoyed and its influences felt—while other things are not neglected, special attention will be paid to the virtue of a child. The Christian parent will proceed in this matter in the light of the judgment and eternity, and never will be satisfied till he sees in his child, something more than a fitness for respectability in life, even a growing meetness for heaven. Whoever can throw light on any, but especially on this part of education, is to be regarded as a most important benefactor to his kind. In close connexion with the duties of the parent, those of the child should be considered. It is no more manifest that the former is under obligation to maintain, educate, and provide for the latter, than that *he* is bound to revere, love, and obey the parent. On this

point the voice of nature is strong and decided. As a general fact, even heathen nations have demanded of the child, duties nearly the same with those required by the Scriptures. Where the light of revelation is not enjoyed, filial piety is indeed much less common ; but this is to be ascribed to the less powerful *motives* to do what is right, rather than to lack of information. We are told indeed of nations where the aged parent is put to death by his own children, apparently with little compunction. Although the awful depravity manifested by this state of things is not to be called in question, I have no idea that violence is done to the parent for its own sake. The practice originated probably in a belief, that when an advanced age was attained, and the streams of human happiness had done flowing, it was doing no unkindness to put a period to life. The received superstitions respecting a future state of being, undoubtedly contributed to the same end. All this shows a dreadfully low state of moral feeling, but cannot be adduced as evidence that cruelty is exercised for its own sake, or that a *mere* desire to be relieved of the burden of providing for a parent in advanced age, is the cause of his being dispatched. It deserves attention too, that only in nations sunk the very lowest in ignorance and pollution, has this practice prevailed.

We are authorized in saying, then, that nature teaches in unequivocal terms, that the child owes to the parent not only obedience in early life, but a tender regard ever after. The duty of the child to obey the parent, is taught in the Scriptures most fully, but in general terms. The same course is pursued here, as in the case of submission to civil authority. We are required to maintain subjection to the powers that be. But there are cases when we

are called upon to resist such authorities. Just so the direction given to children is, obey your parents; but this command is to be interpreted with the limitations of common sense, and, agreeably to other parts of Scripture. It is supposable that the commands of a parent, if obeyed, may lead to the violation of duties we owe to God; in which case they can have no binding authority. The same must be true whenever they go counter to any of the rules of morality.

On the duty of obedience to parents, with these implied limitations, of course, it is proper, nay important to insist. In early life it is almost certain ruin, to be without the habit of submitting implicitly to parental authority. The parent is the natural guardian of the child; and if restraints, so absolutely essential, are imposed by any one, they must be by him. I speak of restraints as absolutely essential. Let these be removed at an age when no habit of self-control has been formed, and what can be expected but a character barren of every virtue, and disposed strongly to vice. Nothing is better established than this, that the inclinations of a child, in particulars without number, must be opposed, to secure any fair promise of happiness or respectability.

While the parent in exacting obedience, claims what is his due in the nature of things, and is promoting his own comfort and that of his family—he is at the same time exerting over his child an influence without which, wretchedness and ruin would ensue. Suppose for one moment the whole system of family government to be broken up; for what would those who come upon life be fit? They would not willingly submit to the restraints of law. Under a free government they would be disorganizers, and under

an arbitrary one, wild and destructive revolutionists. Whether placed among rulers or the ruled, they would prove a curse to all about them—unhappy themselves, and spreading unhappiness as far as their influence extended. I make these remarks to show how important, in every view which we may take of it, is that shaping, which the character receives in a well ordered family where parental authority is recognized and submitted to. I hardly know of a doctrine that could be embraced with more desolating effects, than that which should teach the parent he may not exact obedience, and the child that he need not render it. If we look through the world, we shall find those countries most virtuous—most abounding in moral and intellectual resources, where parental control is most perfect. What has contributed more to give Scotland, and the best portions of our own land, their pre-eminence, than this very thing? If it be a fact, as some say, that under the influence of our popular institutions, family government is becoming greatly abridged, it is a terrible sacrifice, looking no farther, at which we enjoy liberty.

In these remarks on the propriety and importance of obedience to the parent, let me not be understood to intimate that obedience must spring from compulsion. It does imply certainly that the inclinations of the child must often yield—but this may be, while his feelings are going out in all the warmth of filial love. Parental *authority* is no obstacle to that deep and pervading affection which binds together the members of a family. On the contrary, without this, such attachment has no proper foundation on which to rest. The parent whose control is not felt, abandons his appropriate place, and so doing, will not be likely to secure, since he cannot justly claim, the tribute of the heart.

It should ever be borne in mind, that the tribute of the heart *is due*, in this most interesting, this sacred relation. The parent, of all persons on earth, is not to be turned off with constrained and mechanical obedience. Powerful causes of corruption must have operated, when the heart of the child does not warm at the thought of those who watched over him in infancy—first loved him, and best proved their love. Deeply to love a parent, requires no effort. This is the natural channel of the affections. But, alas! there are causes by which it may be obstructed; and we hardly know whether most to pity or reprobate the person in whom this melancholy instance is presented. If it is true, according to an ancient writer, that we say every thing evil of a man, when we say he is ungrateful—we certainly do as much, when we affirm of the child, that he is without filial affection.

No earthly cause forms such a safeguard to virtue, at a period of life when evil biases are easily imparted, as that affectionate confidence in a parent, of which I am speaking. By rendering *him* the most valued companion, and his approving smile the best reward, and home the most attractive place, the child is in a great measure secured from temptations. He can walk in safety where others are engulfed; amid enticements to evil, parental instruction, and the tones of affection with which they were delivered, rise before his mind, and effectually arrest the wicked purpose, before it is fully formed, and check the unruly desire, before it bears fruit in action. Extinguish the workings of filial love, and you destroy in a great measure the modesty, and decorum, and parity exhibited by the better class of the young, and consign them over to coarseness and vice. We are not aware, we can-

not be well aware, how much society is indebted for every thing orderly and attractive, to this influence of domestic love, and for this, let me add, there is no proper substitute. It is impossible the child should not suffer, as well in the means of gaining a virtuous character, as in the sources of legitimate comfort, by being separated at a tender age from his parents, and put under the supervision and instruction of strangers. Though he may receive all the kindness and attentions that could reasonably be demanded, there will still be an important deficiency. The eye that looks on him will not be rendered keen, like the mother's, by a deep and exclusive affection. There will not be that almost prophetic insight into circumstances, trifling as some would consider them, but by which, nevertheless, the work of corruption is begun. Want of principle, manifest incompetency, and perhaps a great pressure of business on the part of the parent, may make it advantageous to remove the child from him when very young ; but that any establishment in which a considerable number are assembled, can furnish a proper substitute for parental care and affection, and supply the same healthful influence, when the formation of character is just beginning, may be seriously questioned.

My remarks hitherto have respected more particularly the period when the child is dependent on the parent and subject to his direction. But his duties do not end, when he has left the home of his infancy. He carries with him a debt of gratitude which he can never repay—but which he is bound to acknowledge by unceasing love and kind attention. The situation of the aged parent, from whose roof those he has reared have one after another gone forth into the world, is peculiar. The winter of life, in freez-

ing up other sources of comfort, has rendered him additionally dependent for happiness on the affection of his children. Next to vice and ignominy on their part, nothing will send a keener pang to his heart, than inattention and coldness. It is painful to think how many have thus wounded the hearts that loved them best—how much happiness has been withheld, that could have been easily yielded, and to which the claim was so good. It is an additional reason, rather than the contrary, for bestowing kind attentions on a parent, that age has brought with it infirmities as well of mind as of body. And never does filial affection shine with such brightness as when, notwithstanding these, it is assiduous in relieving distress, and shedding abroad a glow of happiness in the heart.

It is not unfrequently the case that the aged parent stands in need of assistance from his children; and every thing generous must have abandoned the heart that is not prompted to render it. So strong is the impulse of natural feeling, and so salutary the influence of public opinion, that in Christian countries it is believed that the instances are exceedingly rare in which aid, under these circumstances, is not rendered. The virtuous child will esteem this less a duty than a privilege. If it imposes on him the necessity of self-denial and additional exertions, they will not be withheld. His daily food would not nourish him, his couch would not be a place of repose, if he were obliged to reflect that such blessings are denied a parent.

In considering the domestic relations, the *fraternal* one should not be passed over. Important duties and large measures of happiness stand connected with this. For a general rule, I have said before, our obligations to others are numerous and palpable in proportion to the

intimacy of our connexion with them. The intention of the Almighty that we should especially aim to promote the welfare of brothers and sisters, is clearly inferred from such a connexion, as well as from the mutual attachment which naturally grows between those thus related. The decisions of the moral faculty on this point are likewise clear. If this be doubted, let us reflect on the compunction which any but the most hardened would be compelled to feel, if no discriminating affection had been manifested, and no attention especially kind had been shown to one standing in the relation we are considering: Persons thus connected are the natural friends and protectors of each other. The love which they severally feel to common parents, is a means of drawing them nearer together, and of imparting to their connexion something of its own tenderness. In no situation does youth put on a form so truly lovely, as when seen in the family circle, where brothers and sisters receive and communicate happiness, and all contribute to the satisfaction of fond parents. There may be in all this no intense delight, no tumultuous flow of pleasure, but how little are these to be valued, compared with the serene and simple joys of the domestic scene.

To what, in after years, when time has broken up the family circle, and we are abroad in the wide world, do our hearts go back with such tenderness of recollection. The more there is learned of the world's selfishness and coldness, the stronger and more lovely is the light beaming from the page, which records happiness like this. Nor does the happiness attendant on the fraternal relation, and the duties growing out of it, end when the children of common parents, are removed to a distance from each

other, and their loved home. I know there are some who do not taste this happiness, nor recognize their duties, but such we would believe are exceptions, whereas in general, too strong an attachment is conceived ever to perish amid the strifes and tumults of the world. With all the depravity abounding in our world, how often do we see calamity averted, and falling fortunes arrested by the interposition of a brother. When lately formed friends have forsaken the unfortunate, how often is the tie of relationship felt with effect, and the helping hand extended. This is right, this is at once obeying the promptings of affection, and heeding the call of duty. It should be a maxim with children of the same family to sustain each other, even at the expense of great sacrifices. This is an honor and certainly not among the least of their honors, to which many a family can lay claim.

With respect to the domestic relations we have been considering, I believe it holds true, that they are far too little thought of in early life. The pleasure we receive through the inmates of a father's house, must, it would seem, first be taken from us, before we learn to value it aright. It is when such endearments are no longer within reach, and we experience the coldness and selfishness of strangers, that we appreciate, as it deserves, what we once enjoyed. We then learn that none can love us so much, overlook our failings so easily, and go so far out of the way to serve us, as those who first knew, and loved, and served us. It is melancholy, but not altogether unsalutary, to be taught their importance to our happiness and welfare, by experiencing the want of stability and faithfulness of friendships subsequently formed. Not that all friendships out of the family circle are unworthy of confidence.

But we may rest assured, that when *substantial and decisive* evidences of regard are required, we may look for them far more confidently among our family friends, than any others. In adversity they will not reproach us with want of forecast, will not shun us because of misfortune, nor leave us to suffer alone in sickness and in sorrow. They will be careful of our reputation, and rejoice in our success. They will not, like many others, be alienated by some small clashing of interest, or an unfortunate word. Few things I apprehend are more important than seasonably to realize these considerations, and be led by them to harbor and preserve in warmth the family feeling.

As yet I have said nothing of the conjugal relation,—a connexion which surpasses all others in tenderness and intimacy. If it be criminal to enter into this without affection, it is equally so to suffer affection to die away, and those kind attentions which affection prompts to be discontinued. Did not the world supply instances, we should think it impossible for a man to be so devoid, not only of the attachment corresponding to the vows he had taken, but of generosity and principle, as to be otherwise than kind and attentive in this connexion. To the truly virtuous man, there is something sacred in the very name of *wife*. The woman of feeling and refinement who takes it, does so with an affectionate and confiding heart. She brings her hope of earthly happiness to a point. She adventures every thing in the traffic of the affection. Disappointment here, is final, remediless disappointment, and her portion ever after is that of a desolate heart. These are reflections which will habitually occur to the man of feeling, and exert a most salutary influence, when in moments of care, and vexation, and pains, he is hardly

sensible of the fondness that dwells in his heart. No man can be what he should be in this relation without adding to warmth of attachment, the stability of principle.

Not to enlarge upon the duties of the connexion in question I think it proper to say, that few things are more important to the virtue and happiness of our sex, than due respect for the other. Nothing perhaps is a more indubitable evidence of debasement, than a low opinion of the female character. It is impossible one should have been at all conversant with the refined and well educated of the other sex, provided he possesses the least elevation of character, and not feel for them sentiments of the most unfeigned respect. There are persons, I am aware, who pride themselves upon being high minded young men, who are yet totally destitute of such sentiments. They can even, for their own amusement and that of others, retail stale jests, applicable enough to the worst portions of the sex, but applied by them without the least reason to all. *No one thing* more than this would lead me to decide confidently on a man's destitution of generous and refined sentiments, and his fitness for every thing low and base.

SERMON I.

HOSEA, VI. 3.

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

To the momentous question, what shall we do to be saved—the proper answer is, repent and believe in Christ. It is plainly the duty of every sinner, when he understands the terms of this direction, to comply at once. The necessary knowledge we suppose to be in the possession of all who enter the sanctuary. They *know* enough to obey the great command of the gospel. The preacher is bound, therefore, to urge upon the heart and conscience, the duty of immediate repentance and faith. He has no right to insist on anything else as coming up to what God requires. The command is reasonable, and whoever fails to comply is under condemnation. But when we come to look at the fact in every ordinary case of conversion—we find repentance and faith closely connected with preceding exercises. We do not see men in a state of indifference one moment, and accepting the offers of mercy the next. We do not find the first attempt

at prayer the effectual fervent petition that availeth much. We anticipate, and the moral government of God, as well as facts, authorizes us to anticipate, much preceding seriousness of mind, uncommon activity of conscience, a new and deeper sense of sinfulness, an earnest attention to the means of grace, and the performance of duties hitherto much neglected. Not that all sinners when aroused from their moral apathy have the same views and feelings, precisely—but amid circumstantial differences, there is an essential similarity.

The state of mind I have alluded to is always hopeful ; and whoever has at heart the interests of Zion, and the good of souls, is ready to hail it as such. To this subject I now ask your attention. We have to inquire into the state of mind and course of conduct, which usually precede a saving change. The words I have selected are in point—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord ; his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." The knowledge of God here spoken of—is *saving knowledge*—not that which rests in the mere apprehension of speculative truth—but that which includes a state of the heart.

In the first place, no man follows on to know the Lord, without believing religion of the heart to be a reality. Lodge in the mind a serious doubt on this point—especially let there be a readiness to scout it as the offspring of fanaticism—not an effort will be made, not a step be taken to any purpose. It is not in the nature of man to act with availing decision, where he supposes there is no substantial reason for acting at all. When the duty—the infinite importance of loving God supremely, of being

spiritually minded—of crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, of walking by faith—are insisted on in the hearing of any person, it cannot be supposed an effect will follow, unless these are deemed words of truth and soberness. There is no ground on which to plant the batteries of truth. The influence of the gospel is a moral influence. While, then, the understanding rejects the great facts in the case, you cannot reach the conscience. What are the terrors of the Lord to the man who supposes them unmeaning? What the melting accents of the gospel, till he, who hears, is persuaded he is a sinner,—persuaded that he stands in need of pardon, and without it must be shut out of heaven. The adversary of souls has placed that man, I will not say, at a hopeless, but certainly at a most alarming distance from salvation, who has no prevailing belief, that religion of the heart is a reality. Whoever else may pause, turn and live—with the persuasion he now has, *he* will never do it. Whoever else having a good hope through grace, shall in his dying hour sing the song of victory, and sweetly fall asleep in Jesus, *he* will never do it. Whoever else on the morning of the resurrection, shall come forth from the grave in glory, and meet the Saviour with ten thousand of his saints, *he* will never do it.

Am I told that multitudes are persuaded that religion of the heart is a reality, who nevertheless are prompted by the persuasion to no exertions? Such indeed is the fact.

And therefore in the second place, no man will follow on to know the Lord, till in addition to the before mentioned belief, he *feels it important* for *him* to experience a saving change. This implies, that his feelings correspond in some measure with the convictions of his un-

derstanding. A person in this state of mind not only believes piety to be something real, but there are times when the subject is brought home to his bosom, and awakens his solicitude, and causes him to inquire with more or less anxiety how he may escape the wrath to come. He feels that God is justly angry, on account of his many offences. To effect a reconciliation with him, so as to come under his protection for life and be supported by him in death, he is willing to acknowledge is more desirable than anything besides. He cannot renounce the hope of ultimately arriving at peace of conscience, and an inheritance with those that are sanctified. There are times when the interests of his soul are raised into such a prominence, that the lustre *vanishes* from the unholy objects he has pursued with engrossing eagerness. In this state of mind he could not rest at ease, if the wealth of nations were poured upon him, or if the world gazed upon his elevation and rung with his praises. I apprehend the belief of which I spoke, and this impression that religion is of all things most important, are not of *very* rare occurrence among the unconverted. At least, there are moments and days when *all and more than all* I have mentioned is felt, by persons, having no hope and no ground of hope in Christ. On them it is proper to urge the duty of following on to know the Lord.

Following on to know the Lord consists in *acting* on present feelings and convictions respecting duty. Whoever believes religion of the heart to be a reality, and feels it to be important, should immediately turn what he believes and what he feels to account. He turns them to account, who is prompted by them to exertion. Let me explain. We will suppose that case of common occur-

rence, when *in a degree*, but not *adequately*, it is deemed important to secure an interest in Christ. While the person in question feels something of this, but is aware he does not feel enough—what shall he do? I say let him act on the feeling he does possess. According as he observes or does not observe this direction, he will or will not follow on to know the Lord. Instead of waiting, till in some unknown way, deeper feeling has taken possession of his soul, let him go to God with present feeling. If the salvation of his soul in *any* degree awaken his anxiety, he can implore help of God, with a corresponding degree of earnestness. Even a low measure of feeling may be expressed in prayer. And farther, this confessed inadequacy of feeling, the very fact of being criminally insensible, may be made the first occasion of prayer. You feel, but, taking your own word for it, not enough. You say there is ground of apprehension, that you feel no more. Now go to God, and make what you have just acknowledged, matter of confession to him. If you do not feel, in the degree demanded, and as you say, in the degree you desire, confess this very deficiency to God, and mourn over it in his presence. If you perceive there is ground of alarm, lest this insensibility should continue and ripen into confirmed obduracy, (and you know such has been the fact with thousands now lifting up their eyes in torment,) pour the regrets your insensibility occasions, into the ears of God. Suppose you go to him with a small measure of feeling, how do you know but you may feel more, before you rise from your knees? If prayer *begins* with feeble petitions and wandering desires, how do you know but that eternal things may so open on your mind, as to give intensity to feeling? Which do you con-

ceive is more agreeable to facts, and the moral government of God,—that feeling should grow *more intense* in this way, or when no attempt is made at prayer ?

Again, you know yourself to be a sinner. You actually perceive in your heart wrong feelings—feelings you acknowledge to be wrong. You may make them the occasion of acting in a way, which will be “following on to know the Lord.” When such a feeling shows itself, confess it to God at once, in terms expressing what you think of its sinfulness. If you saw its enormity but feebly in the first instance, this is the very way to come at a more correct apprehension. Having begun to look at your feelings in this way, you will form something like a habit of examining your heart. You will see with growing distinctness, its deep alienation from God. You can therefore confess in stronger terms of self-abasement, and implore pardon with more intense desires.

That you may follow on to know the Lord, survey the whole field of duty, with the determination that when wrong is discovered, you will confess the same to God, implore his forgiveness, and aim at amendment. For all God’s kindness have you made no return of gratitude ? Notwithstanding all that is lovely and glorious in his character, have you brought to him no tribute of affection ? Though Christ laid down his life for your sins, have you refused to give him your heart ? Have you neglected the word of God, able to make you wise to salvation ? Have you harbored malice towards a human being ? Have you injured another ? Here then you have sin to confess, pardon to ask, and amendment to aim at. As you desire to be saved, enter on the whole of this at once. The more you think of having done wrong, the more will you see

the odiousness of sin, and its awful consequences. The more you reflect on pardon, the more to be valued will it seem.

What I desire to impress on every one in earnest to be saved, is—the importance of improving advantages already gained. It is an advantage gained, when the heart is felt to be sinful ;—the improvement of that advantage is to go to God at once, and confess it, imploring pardon and sanctification. It is an advantage gained, when you desire to know the will of God,—the improvement of that advantage is to search the Scriptures, and pray God to enlighten the mind. It is an advantage gained, when it crosses the mind as something overwhelmingly awful, to appear at the bar of God with no part in his favor: the improvement of this advantage, is to beseech him to have mercy on your soul.

I am aware some will reply to this by saying, I am unconverted. Of what avail will my prayers be? My motives are not right. But you feel your need of what God alone can bestow. And do men who see no alternative between *perishing* and *receiving a favor*, inquire into their motives, in asking for that favor? They have no time for that. Let your earnestness increase a thousand fold, (for I am addressing those who have some earnestness,) and this metaphysical objection will never keep you from God. Therefore call it vain, and treat it as such. One of Satan's completest devices, is to induce a serious inquirer to look at himself rather than God. God has graciously informed us what we must do to be saved. The eye should be filled with him and his commands. Say you have no heart to obey—should you attempt it, your motives would be wrong—and act on these declara-

tions, and you at the same time cast reproach on God, and plant mountains in your path to heaven.

I believe I have described essentially what is meant by following on to know the Lord. Were these endeavors ever persisted in with a full determination not to give over the object—without resulting in an experimental saving knowledge of God? I firmly believe they never were and never will be.—On what do I rest the certainty of such a result? Not on the ground of the endeavor being a substitute for repentance and faith, or being the same thing with them; nor on the ground of the sinner's making himself better in this way; but simply on what follows. His moral sensibilities are roused—he is taught more impressively his sinfulness—he is taught to feel his need of a Saviour—he is driven by conscience from his refuges of lies—in fine, he is brought to that point of conscious helplessness, at which God interposes by his Spirit. How these opinions may square with this or that system of theology is in my apprehension of little import. It will be time to renounce them when disproved by facts and the word of God. Though conversion be instantaneous, that which precedes it, and without which in all ordinary cases, it does not take place, is progressive. And let me say further, it depends on the sinner whether his conviction that religion of the heart is a reality, and his impression of its importance shall, or shall not ripen into all that is meant by following on to know the Lord. The sinner sometimes expresses himself as if he had no starting place, as if there was nothing for him to do, till God had done some new and strange thing for him. This is false—is a delusion. Is it nothing, that you acknowledge conversion to be essential to future happiness, and the only alter-

native to future misery? Is it nothing, that a sense of your sinfulness has sometimes pressed on your heart and weighed down your spirits? Is it nothing, that you have felt you cannot, as you are, enter heaven, if it be the abode of holy spirits tuning their harps to undying songs of praise? Is it nothing, that the deep tones of conscience have shook your heart and drowned your vain excuses? From the point, then, at which you have arrived, dear hearers, follow on to know the Lord. Your own hardness of heart may lengthen out the hours of night, but God shall come into you more gratefully than the early light, first tinging the eastern sky, and thence advancing to perfect day—for his going forth is prepared as the morning.

I. In the first place, I infer from this subject, that the circumstances of those who have no persuasion that religion of the heart is a reality, and no feeling of its importance are discouraging. It is a fact to be stated with the utmost plainness, that on such the convicting influences of God's Spirit do not descend. Before such an event, an event just as essential to salvation, as the sun to the light of the day—the motives of the gospel are brought home to the breast and made to act powerfully on the conscience. They produce conviction of sin, vivid apprehensions of the future, strong desires and great efforts to escape the wrath to come. I say it is a fact that these go before conversion. Yea, it ought to be a fact, since the government of God is a moral government. And let those who are at ease in impenitence, apply this fact to themselves. God will never force you into his kingdom; he would cease to be a moral governor, if he set aside your freedom of choice to make you new creatures. He never will break into your tumultuous pleasures and worldly desires

and schemes of ambition to shed abroad his love in your hearts. These intruders (such they really are) must be banished, before a holy God will dwell with you. They never will be banished till the interests of eternity press upon your souls. Do you say, this will come when death approaches? And is it safe to leave the business of a life, the business which requires so much careful attention, so much composure, to the hour when a thousand objects float in confusion before the reeling sense, when the soul is agitated between groundless hope and the agonies of despair. What place less fitted than the dying man's couch for that preparatory action of truth on the mind, without which the life giving influences from above do not descend?

In conclusion, let me drop one word for those, who think it no time to follow on to know the Lord, because there is no religious excitement among us. I would not open my lips against the reality and preciousness of those seasons, when God pours out his Spirit in unusual measures. But Satan reaps some advantage from the very causes that shake his kingdom. Besides corrupting the purity of religious revivals, he persuades not a few, that only at such times is there any real prospect of their conversion. They come practically to view *nineteen twentieths* of the season of probation worth nothing for the great purpose of its bestowment. They hear the gospel preached—are alarmed perhaps—but say to themselves, nothing can be done *now*. They go on in impenitence, thinking there is no object in seeking an interest in Christ, till the breath of the Almighty has rolled up around them the waves of public feeling.

I am *sure*, I have touched a ground of deception that

has proved and is proving fatal to thousands. Oh my hearers be not in this way cheated out of heaven—do not thus draw on yourselves the wrath of God. His grace, his promises do not respect times and seasons. He is now on a throne of grace. The door of mercy is now open. The streams of salvation are not like the waters, which the angel came down to trouble at distant intervals, and which after one was relieved, could heal no more. The fountain opened for guilt and uncleanness is ever ready.

“It is a fountain filled with blood
 Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood
 Lose all their guilty stains.”

Come to it *now*, follow on to know the Lord *at once*. If you wait till solemnity spreads over the faces of others, if you wait till the slothful professor of piety shakes himself from the dust, you may wait too long ; you may wait till the lamp of hope goes out, and everlasting darkness gathers around you,

SERMON II.

MATTHEW, XI. 21.

"Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

CHORAZIN and Bethsaida were cities of Galilee, much frequented by our Saviour in the course of his ministry. These, together with Capernaum, were the principal scenes of his miracles and instructions. Here he healed the sick, raised the dead, and taught the way to heaven. But contrary to all reasonable anticipation, (considering the extraordinary means employed,) there were but few cases of conviction and reformation among the inhabitants of these cities. Many were doubtless filled with astonishment at what they saw, and with momentary compunction at what they heard. Those who beheld their friends restored from the borders of the grave, or from death itself, at the word of Christ, were doubtless grateful. Those who listened to his more than human eloquence, were probably moved, and at times almost persuaded to acknowledge and obey him. But these impres-

sions, however many and various, were transitory. They resulted in no radical improvement of heart or life. Among the inhabitants of these upbraided cities, there was no general turning to the Lord. They did not receive Christ as the promised Messiah; they did not at his bidding renounce their palpable errors, and corrupting prejudices, and adopt a new mode of life. In one word, they did not repent.

Their impenitence, persevered in as it was, amid the mighty works and pungent exhortations of Christ, drew from him the impressive language of the text. Though at an infinite remove from all human repentment, he is said to have upbraided these cities. He assures them that even Tyre and Sidon, wicked as they were, would have repented, under similar circumstances. On the pagan inhabitants of these heathen cities, his miracles and doctrines would not have been lost. Guilty and degraded as they were, they would not have closed their eyes upon the light of the world, and madly put away from them eternal life.

The language of Christ, in upbraiding the impenitent cities of Galilee, has sometimes been interpreted with unwarrantable closeness, and thus been made to support erroneous views of conversion. Because our Saviour says, that had his mighty works been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented, some have denied the necessity of divine influences in conversion. They go on to say, that the means of grace, without a special interposition of God, are amply sufficient to produce the change, which the Scriptures call regeneration. But let it be remembered it was not the intention of Christ, in anything he said, to explain the nature of conversion, but to set forth the great hardness of heart, which prevailed in the cities of

Galilee. It would be wrong, therefore, to infer from this passage that means are, or are not, sufficient to produce genuine repentance. On this particular topic, the text gives us no information. A multitude of other passages, however, as well as the general spirit of the gospel, are decisive on this point. If anything be made abundantly clear in the Scriptures, this surely is,—that the operations of the Spirit must accompany the means of grace, in order to give them efficacy. Means, by which we understand the truths and motives of God's word, have an important part to perform in the conversion of sinners. They are indeed essential to such an event. For when the proper means are not enjoyed, we do not find men brought to repentance. But the Scriptures clearly set forth the necessity of a divine influence, conspiring with means, and giving them a supernatural power, that is, a power we cannot give them. When God converts a sinner, (for his hand is always in this work,) he employs the instrumentality of truth. In accordance with this fact, we call the gospel, as made known to men in any shape, especially *preaching*, the means of grace. However essential these may be, and they are absolutely so, their independent agency does not bring men to repentance. It is found to be so with the most efficacious means now employed. It was thus with the miracles and preaching of Christ.

Again, when our Lord affirmed, that had his mighty works been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, we are not to conclude that repentance would have been universal in those places. We cannot say it would not have been, but the language of Christ does not compel us to adopt that conclusion. If we interpret with that measure of closeness on the one

hand, to be consistent, we must with the same closeness on the other, and therefore conclude that not a single case of repentance occurred in the cities of Galilee. Whereas we are informed that no fewer than three of Christ's disciples were from one of them. What our Saviour said on this point, goes the length of affirming, that, had his miracles been performed before the eyes, and his instructions fallen on the ears, of the Tyrians and Sidonians, a general attention would have been the consequence; cases of repentance would have been numerous, so as to form a broad and manifest distinction between them and the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida. Christ intended to inform those who heard his impressive language, that among them, there were difficulties in the way of repentance, which did not exist in the case of the heathens;—yea, the very heathen, whom they regarded the farthest from righteousness. He clearly informs them, that the difference between themselves and those abhorred Gentiles was not, as they supposed, in their favor, but against them. And the reason, whether these refusers of the gospel understood it or not, was apparently plain. Having a knowledge of their duty, and not performing it, it was in their power to sin against God in a degree the heathen could not. Having the offer of eternal life in the name of Christ, and rejecting the boon of him who came from heaven to bring it, they acquired a hardness of heart beyond the reach of those who had grown up in the darkness of heathenism. The grace of God which brings salvation, while it opened heaven for their admission, being despised, reared a distinct wall of separation between them and the divine favor. They possessed a character peculiar to themselves. This pecu-

liarity it was which caused Christ to upbraid them. The word in the text was not pronounced on the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida because they were sinners, but because their sin was of a peculiar dye. Not because, in common with the entire family of man, they had wandered from God, and exposed themselves to the inflictions of his wrath. Christ came into our world to call sinners to repentance—to seek and save that which was lost. They were upbraided because, after the coming of Christ, with ample vouchers in regard to his divine character and mission, they rejected him—refused to repent, and thus gave a new character to their rebellion against God.

Our subject, my hearers, settles a principle of great practical moment. It is this,—the repentance of some sinners is more difficult than that of others. It is so in regard to communities, and it is none the less so in regard to individuals. It is the latter aspect, in which I desire to view the subject. I may be asked, Does not God bring men to repentance, and can anything be difficult for him? It is very true there is nothing arduous for the Almighty. He can exert an influence that is irresistible. It is as easy for God to bring one sinner to repentance as another. At the same time, there may be more to be overcome in one than in another; and it may be the purpose of God seldom or never to overcome certain difficulties in the way to heaven. The hardness of heart acquired by the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, was suffered to remain and interpose an insuperable barrier to their salvation. God, furthermore let us be aware, is not the only agent when sinners are brought to repentance. If his agency be essential to the result, so is the sinner's own agency. It is the man who repents, and not God who

repents for him. Through all the steps of the sinner's return to God, he does nothing by compulsion—all is voluntary. Whatever would stand in his way, were nothing done by divine influence, stands in his way now. The consequence is, that the repentance of some sinners is more difficult than that of others.

This principle is illustrated by comparing the condition of the old and young. The repentance of the former is more difficult than that of the latter. As men advance in life, their habits of thinking, and feeling, and acting, become fixed, and for this reason, the great change implied in repentance is rendered more difficult. If, for a time, the thoughts are solemnly turned towards God and eternity, owing to the power of habit, how readily do they return, and flow on in their accustomed channel. In this we have a reason for what must be acknowledged as true, that, of those who become pious, a great majority become so in early life.

This reflection deserves the most serious attention of every person who has passed the period of youth without gaining an interest in Christ. It is more difficult for you to repent now than it once was. A greater effort is demanded now than formerly to withdraw your mind in a needful measure from lower objects and place it on God. The subject of religion will have more to contend with in gaining a permanent interest in your affections. The very best season to repent you have suffered to go by. Now, will you suffer difficulties, already formidable, to go on increasing, as they must do while you delay repentance, or, in full view of your case, will you tear your mind, if need be, from every thing else, that you may repent of sin? God grant that you may be strong to do it.

Repentance, again, is more difficult for the thoughtless than for the sober minded. A wide difference exists among those who are alike impenitent, in regard to the frequency and solemnity of their thoughts about God, and their condition in a future world. Such thoughts are almost strangers to some minds, while they are often admitted to others, and beget a serious cast of mind. It cannot be doubted, that those who seldom or never reflect on these topics, or if they reflect at all, do it in the most careless manner, are, on that account, less likely to repent. There can be no repentance without reflection. Before that event, the thoughts must be turned in upon the conceptions of the heart. The evil of sin, and the misery to which it exposes the sinner, must be felt. The law of God must be contemplated as the perfect rule of right, and the penalty annexed to disobedience be acknowledged righteous. The Saviour must be viewed as the only ground of pardon and justification. The motives contained in the gospel, in order to have any power, must be surveyed and dwelt on. How difficult, then, must that sinner's repentance be, who, in regard to these momentous subjects, is almost without thought. The case remaining as it does, how can he repent? how can he be saved? He is alike without the knowledge on which repentance must proceed, and the habit of mind necessary to acquire that knowledge.

Again, immorality interposes a special difficulty in the way of repentance. That men, profane, intemperate, and vicious in other respects never repent, we do not say. Some of them ever have been monuments of divine grace. But that the number is exceedingly small, and forms exceptions to the general rule, I have no hesitation in af-

firming. It will be found almost always, that those who plunge into immorality, by so doing, settle the question in regard to their souls, and in the end go down to perdition. To them, "hope never comes, that comes to all." It would seem that the appropriate reflection for them is, if the Saviour came from God, we are undone forever. They would, indeed, on application to Christ, find him ready to forgive, and bestow eternal life, for his pardoning mercy knows no bounds. But judging of the future from the past, what reason is there to suppose they will thus apply? What reason to suppose, that after having loved sin in its most debasing, deadening forms, they will awake to righteousness and follow the Saviour. We may hope for something like this, but judging from all we know of God's moral government, and all we have seen, is there any reason to expect it?

Let the effect of immorality, in rendering repentance more difficult, be solemnly considered by all who feel temptations to sin, or with whom vice is incipient. To such I would present this truth in all its awfulness. I would beseech you to pause, lest those steps be taken which it is morally certain will never be retraced. If you would have the least ground of hope, in regard to that eternity which must be filled up with happiness or misery, be persuaded to shun sin. If the pleasures of sin have ever been painted to your fancy as an island in the ocean, green and fair to look upon, think of the wrecks and dead men's bones that are strewed along its shores. Hear the voice of wisdom, which says, Avoid it; for the way thereof is the way to hell.

Let the mere moralist bring forward those dissuasives from vice, which are drawn from the present world. Let

him say, (and he can say it with truth,) that to be vicious is to be wretched, even in this life ; that *vice* blasts the fairest prospects, plants in the soul the stings of remorse, abridges life, and plucks the name from the records of earth. I bring my argument from eternity, and assure you that sin is the direct way to perdition ; a way, from which, alas, how few have ever withdrawn their feet. Is it not enough that you have never yet opened your hearts to the Saviour, and, consequently, that a fearful uncertainty hangs over your destiny ? Would you, by pursuing the pleasures of sin which are but for a moment and end in bitterness, convert this uncertainty into an assured prospect of ruin, without remedy ? Would you rear an impassable mountain in the way to heaven ? Would you, by familiarizing your lips to profaneness, make it almost certain that they never will utter the language of prayer ? If you shudder at this, as I know you do, then fly from a monster, who throws about him almost resistless fascinations, and lives but to destroy.

We are taught by this subject, my hearers, our solemn responsibility, in consequence of living under the gospel. The inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida beheld the miracles, and enjoyed the preaching of Christ. But they did not repent. Nay, more, the very opportunities they might have improved to gain divine wisdom, and a title to heaven, they made the occasion of more aggravated sin against God, and of a final doom more dreadful than that of the heathen. Instead of allowing the proper influence of Christ's instructions, they became more hardened in sin, and more averse to repentance. We, my hearers, have the same gospel as did the inhabitants of Galilee ; and are called to repentance as distinctly, and as loudly,

as they were. If we reject offered mercy, nothing can prevent the very same result as happened to them. In the nature of things, it is not possible that we should hear the gospel without an influence on our hearts. If it makes no abiding impression, and is not preparing the way for such an impression, it must have the effect of incurable obduracy, and make our condemnation more dreadful than that of pagans. We cannot escape from this conclusion. The Scriptures force it upon us, facts sustain it, and the very nature of the human mind compels us to adopt it. Where the word of God is known, it is a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. We cannot hear of Christ and redemption, and peace, and hell,—and be as though we never had heard these things. We are compelled either to accept of offered pardon and eternal life on gospel terms, or to reject them. And it is upon this intelligent, long continued rejection which continually hardens the heart, that God's fiercest anger will fall.

We see from our subject how essential repentance is as a condition of salvation. God calls all men to *repentance*; and it is impossible, under his righteous government, that any but penitents should enjoy his favor. It is the humble and confessing sinner, and he only, that God can forgive and receive to himself. We must hate and forsake sin, renounce our own righteousness, must justify God, and condemn ourselves, or the glorious gospel will avail us nothing.

SERMON III.

JOB, XIV. 14.

"If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

To be unconcerned about a future state of being, is as plainly degrading as it is perilous. If man actually is born with a soul destined to eternal existence, how can he consent to think, and feel, and act, just as though nothing beyond the grave was to be apprehended or hoped for? This is voluntarily to come down from the exalted position God has assigned him, and take his place with the brutes that perish.

There is enough in the history of heathenism, to put to the blush thousands on whom the gospel has shed its glorious light. To some of them the credit is due, at least, of having inquired, *anxiously*, whether the soul is destined to survive the body, and if so, in what condition of joy or suffering? Some of their writings have reached us, and of these, no passages are half so interesting as those which detail their conjectures respecting futurity. There is

something unspeakably touching in beholding great minds brought to a stand on such a subject. We see them in the attitude of painful hesitation, whether the light within was, in a few days, to be quenched, or to shed its brightness over a wider field. Sometimes they could well-nigh persuade themselves, that if a man die he *shall* live again. Sometimes they despaired of it—but oftener felt all the torture of indecision. They had feelings as well as we. In their case as well as ours, the ties of affection were ruptured. They saw the grave devouring their friends and companions, and before themselves lay the land of darkness, from whose boundary no traveller returns. Who will wonder that the day of death was dreadful to them? They were privileged to hear no commanding voice, saying, “Lazarus come forth.” No cheering promise from heaven announced, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise; awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead. O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will be thy destruction.”

Job, whose words we have in the text, felt, at times, something of the same oppressive uncertainty which hung in such impenetrable darkness around the heathen world. The immortality of the soul was indeed *revealed* before the coming of Christ, but, by no means, with that distinctness and strength of light, in which our Saviour placed it. A vigorous faith could reach this great and fundamental truth, and rest in it joyfully. But when the mind was agitated, or spiritual darkness had settled on the soul, it sometimes eluded the grasp. When Job inquired with so much solicitude respecting future existence, he was under affliction; and the *immediate* tendency of af-

fiction is to weigh down the mind, and shake its confidence in God. Thus we find this eminent saint sometimes giving way to despondency, and obeying the suggestions of sense rather than confiding implicitly in God. Losing sight of the promises of Jehovah, he lets his eye wander on nature. "There is hope," says he, "of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet, through the scent of water, it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away. Yea, man dieth and giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" In connexion with this, are found the words of our text. "If a man die, shall he live again?" Here Job pauses; and it would seem, at this very moment, light broke in on his mind, and the hopes of heaven dawned on his bewildered eyes. Without stopping to assume his persuasion, that at death he should be transferred to another world, his mind passes in a most interesting manner to the thought contained in the following part of the text. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." As if he had said, since the hour of death is not to terminate my existence, but I shall live and be happy in another world, I will do and suffer the will of God, while he continues me here. Whether he sends me blessings, or lay on me his afflictive hand,—both alike shall find me anticipating my departure hence, waiting for my change.

Every believer has, essentially, the same anticipations as Job. It enters into the elements of his faith,—that if a man die, he *shall* live again,—that the pardon of sin and justification unto life, is made sure to all who believe

in Christ, and that immediately after death they enter upon a state of blessedness, which God has graciously provided for the sake of his Son. Though distressed with doubts and sinking under temptations, he expects a glorious termination to his earthly career. Whenever you find a decided Christian, you will find him waiting for his change.

To wait for any event, implies a feeling of interest in that event. Now the change in question is surpassingly more important than every other concern—and the believer realizes this. There is in his mind not only a rational conviction that the interests of time are insignificant by the side of eternity, but the truth is so apprehended as to leave an impression on the mind as a practical fact. It matters little to what truth the understanding yields assent, if it never comes home to the heart. But let the retributions of eternity, and the change going before them, once make their appropriate lodgement in the mind; only let them be seen as they are, and he who is thus affected shall be found in a waiting position. This, from the nature of the case, *must* be the position of Christ's followers. Faith, being the *substance* of things hoped for, has brought their minds into intimate connexion with a class of objects that carry forward the thoughts into eternity. Their treasure is in heaven, but thither they have not arrived. As yet they are waiting for it. The anticipations of the future, of scenes which are presently to rise before the mind in impressive grandeur, are the very means God employs to wean them from earth. They look down upon their change, and it chills the throb of low desire, and deadens the ear to the accents of human applause.

We lay it down then as an essential ingredient in Christian waiting, that a deep and abiding interest is taken in the anticipated change. It employs the thoughts and engages the feelings, or there is no propriety in giving it the name.

The believer, again, is waiting for his change in the particular of making preparations for it. That there are men in the church of Christ having a name to live, whose main object it is to make provision for the flesh to gratify the lusts thereof, and the pride of life, we are well assured. But let no one imagine these are the followers of Christ. "Prepare to meet thy God," is the exhortation which sounds forth from his word and providence. And in obeying this command, the Christian finds his business. They, and they only, except by a rare dispensation of mercy, who live the life of the righteous, are permitted to die his death. And what is the life of the righteous but an unceasing effort to please God, and this too in reference to appearing before him in judgment.

It is sadly to be apprehended that many are indulging hopes of heaven on other grounds than that of adequate preparation. God, when he makes salvation a matter of grace, from the foundation to the top stone, does not treat us as inactive beings. Nor will he admit, as an apology for what he righteously demands, the pressure of worldly cares and business. A man has no right to any more of these than are compatible with the supreme love and diligent service of God. And if any come between him and that which is his great concern here, viz. preparation for his final account, let him throw them from him at any sacrifice.

We proceed to consider the nature of that change

which the believer has in prospect, and for which he is waiting. He is to arrive at this change through death, with all its terrors,—death, that stern tyrant from whose sight and touch all nature recoils. The sentence has passed upon all men, believers as well as others, that they must die. There is a struggle, too, when the soul is driven from the body. Every power of nature is summoned to this final conflict. 'Tis a field of deadly fight, on which every inch of ground is contested. But nothing can resist the tide of successful invasion, as it rolls on to the last fortress, and swallows up life;—resistance becoming every moment feebler and feebler. Surely death is no trifle. No man in his senses ever thought or spoke of it as such. It mocks at all that is graceful and beautiful in nature—chills the frame—stiffens the limbs, and stills the heart forever. It brings with it a pang, we know not what nor how great,—separates friends, loving each other as their own souls, and sends the mourners weeping and disconsolate about the streets. Neither to the physical pangs of dying, nor the bereavements connected with it as such, does God require us to be reconciled. Our very nature forbids us to do so, if we would. It is from death, as affecting our moral condition, that the sting is removed; and here it is the privilege of a Christian to view it, not only without aversion, but with delight.

1. This change, in the first place, is from sin to holiness, and as such, is waited for by all who hate the one and love the other. A soul enlightened from above, recognizes the law of God as *binding* in all its length and breadth. And this law demands nothing less than perfect holiness. It is the standard, and condemns as odious

to God, the least deviation, as well in thought and feeling as in action. But no man on earth is free from sin. Its stain is never gone, till the soul escapes from its prison. The child of God takes that view of his law on the one hand, and of his own heart on the other, which furnishes constant occasion for mourning. The Spirit of God has given greater activity to conscience—a finer edge to his moral sensibilities. Sin, too, rises before him in the odious colors of ingratitude. He sees it arrayed against the God whom he loves, and the Saviour who died to redeem his soul. To find himself guilty of such alienation, often brings over his spirit the most pungent distress. He can say with David, “My sin is ever before me,” and with Paul, “O! wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death.” Dissatisfaction with himself is of all things most oppressive to the believer.

When he lays aside his mortal part, he becomes exempt from every defilement. The burden which he carried as an ever present grievance, weighs him down no more. A kind hand has taken it away. His robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. There shall be no more breaking covenant with God—no more backsliding—no more wanderings of heart—no more wounding of the conscience—no more languor of desire—no more indecision and vacillation in the service of God. Sin, the usurper, with whom many a painful conflict was maintained, is now driven out, and the heart’s every pulsation beats for God. You cannot, my hearers, be lovers of holiness and a holy God, without dwelling on this feature of a believer’s change, with a satisfaction most peculiar.

2. The change in question, again, by being one from

sin to perfect holiness, is likewise a change from suffering to perfect enjoyment. For those, who sit down in the mansions of rest, a fulness of joy is provided. They shall ever drink of the river of delight that flows from God's right hand. Sorrow and sighing are unknown within the enclosures of the New Jerusalem. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love him." And methinks there will be a heightening of enjoyment, a more exquisite relish, in the case of those, who have toiled, and wept, and suffered, in a vale of tears.

3. Another feature in this change will be found in faith giving place to perfect vision. What we know and enjoy of God, is received through the medium of faith, and is therefore imperfect. What we now behold, is through a glass darkly. To see face to face, see as we are seen, and know as we are known, is reserved for the time when saints shall wear their crowns of glory. The life of a believer is filled up with ungratified desires. He would see more of God and his Saviour, rejoice in the more uninterrupted and intense light of his countenance, drink deeper than he is permitted to do here into the life-giving spirit of our religion. The time is coming, and his change shall reveal that time in all its glory, when his desires though a thousand fold more earnest and comprehensive, shall meet their full gratification.

Such being the change before all, who love our Lord Jesus Christ, let us now consider the manner of their waiting for it.

1. The believer, in the first place, waits in the attitude of activity. God has assigned him duties, in the discharge of which, he is to demonstrate affection to his

Father in heaven. The power of the gospel is not felt by the man, who is not stirred up by it, to something of activity. Many duties to be discharged by the believer, demand self-denial. He cannot meet the requirements of God, without resolutely taking up his cross. He has inclinations to oppose of great strength—desires to suppress, and by the grace of God, *to exterminate*, that are clamorous for gratification. The whole man must be presented, a living sacrifice unto God. The body he must keep under, and bring all things into subjection unto Christ. Nor may his efforts end here. God has made his people the salt of the earth, has set them up as the light of the world, whose ever increasing brightness is destined to scatter the darkness and gloom of sin.

We know very well, there is a way of ridding one's self of every obligation extending beyond his own door, but which carries along with it a demonstration of the soul's supreme devotion to self. We must serve God, say these seekers of their own things and not the things that are Christ's,—we must serve God in our several callings. All very true in itself, but often made a wretched apology for not serving him at all. Look on this world, for which eighteen hundred years ago Jesus Christ laid down his life. Look upon it, and ask yourselves, is there nothing to do? Does every knee bow, and every tongue devoutly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father? Or, rather, does not the darkness of sin unrepented of, with a few bright spots excepted, rest on the earth's wide surface? Does it not extend to your community and turn away the rays of mercy from your own doors? This cloud of darkness shall never retire, till rolled back by yourselves and fellow Christians. While

waiting for your change, then, send up your fervent prayer, and put forth your vigorous exertions, for the extension of Christ's kingdom. And thus you will do, if God has lighted up in your breasts that charity, which seeketh not her own.

2. The servant of Christ, in the second place, waits for his change in the attitude of patience and submission to the divine will. We are to suffer, as well as do God's will; and by the former, even more than the latter, is strength of attachment to him exhibited. When evils are sustained without murmurings, without a prevailing wish to hasten the time of riddance, and sustained thus, because they are felt to come from God—he is honored and Christian character evinced. In that work of sanctification God is carrying on in the believer's heart, important use is made of suffering. Without it, the Christian graces could not be exercised, and it is by exercise, they gain vigor and firmness. Though in appointing trials, he seems to act as a sovereign, bestowing on different persons a difference of treatment, there is not one in his wide family, who is a stranger to chastisement. It is one of the badges of sonship, one of the evidences of divine favor. No man can be a follower of Christ without sharing in some measure his fate. Suffering with him is the condition of reigning with him. A *high* measure of sanctification will ordinarily be found, connected with peculiar trials. Men of whom the world was not worthy, have passed through it in a path almost uniformly thorny. Could our eyes open on the world of glory, we should doubtless find nearest their master, those who have sustained the greatest degree of suffering in the spirit of Christ. To lie submissively under the hand of God, and

while he apparently frowns, never to lose that confidence which has great recompense of reward, forms a great part of the Christian's business. 'This demands the exercise of that faith, which lays a strong hold on things invisible, a trust in God which, while he *feels*, will not suffer him to repine, which though the heart bleeds, will not allow it to rise up in opposition to God.

3. Again, in the third place, you shall find the believer waiting in the attitude of hope. God never meant he should come into the actual possession of much, while the days of his pilgrimage are lengthened out. Enough to keep his spirits from prostration, is all he can expect. But on the score of hope, he is shut up to no close limitation. The imagination may expatiate without a check, and shed all its splendor upon the heavenly fields. The Christian's hope, too, is as imperishable, as it is bright. It is anchored within the vail, and closely bound around the throne of God. It is safely placed beyond the reach of change, and the fluctuations of the world bearing on them, the wreck of earthly expectations, cannot reach the rock on which it stands. Compare it with the hope of those, whose affections linger here below, and which, like the spider's web, yields to the breath of heaven. Behold it, follower of Christ, and rejoice.

And now, let me ask, are you, my hearers, waiting for your change? Is it something of deeper interest in your view than anything besides? Something for which you are making preparations, something you are anticipating in the active discharge of duty, in submission to the divine will, under the cheering influence of Christian hope. Be not impatient. You may not stretch forth your hand to accelerate the wheels of time. Our Lord shall come

and will not tarry. Presently you shall reap, if you faint not. Soon you shall reach the heavenly fields and walk the golden streets. Soon the time of mourning shall have passed, and you will pillow your head forever, where it shall no more feel the throb of agony. It were well, if among those who bear the name of Christ, none could be found who are strangers to Christian preparation for death. Ye who have no part in the Christian's anticipations, for what do you wait? For greater possessions and higher enjoyments on earth? Remember, God can and will make the bed of down you are preparing, an engine of torture, converting your earthly props into daggers, piercing the very soul.

Let every one bear in mind, that there is before him a great change. We have seen how glorious that of the believer is. But in the case of those who meet their final hour in impenitence, it bears the marks of perdition. This we must believe till we are able to blot the clearest declarations from the word of God, and stifle the voice that rises out of our own bosoms. And, merciful heaven, over whose heads does this danger hang?—over those of the impenitent without exception. And how many are there, who time and again, when the offer has been made—up to the age of twenty, forty, sixty years, have put away from them eternal life. And can hope come to them that comes to all. It can, blessed be God, if they will now in this accepted time, this day of salvation, take the attitude of penitents, and look believingly on the light of the world. There is a name given under heaven whereby a man may be saved. There is a fountain open to the cleansing of polluted souls. There is a golden chain let down from heaven to earth, and this can draw a sinner up.

SERMON IV.

HEBREWS, XI. 13.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

ALMOST the entire chapter from which these words are taken, relates to the power of faith in the ancient saints. We are taught by their example how mighty, how sustaining, how animating, how controlling is this blessed principle. They believed in God, and it was counted to them for righteousness. They believed in God, and their faith shed a guiding light on their path through the world, and accompanied them to the verge of eternity.

After glancing at the *lives* of certain ancient worthies, the Apostle adds—these all *died* in faith. Faith, my brethren, would not be what it is, were its power and consolations to desert the believer on the approach of death. And here you may mark a wide difference between faith, and those things which the world so much covets, and so ardently pursues. What is his wealth to the rich man, his honors to the ambitious, his pleasures to the voluptuary, when assured that he must speedily die. Faith is

something to *die* in, as well as *live* by. And what is said of Abel and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham,—that they departed in faith,—may be affirmed in all its preciousness, of myriads more. It was so with all the ancient saints. It was so with the blessed company of Apostles and martyrs. It has been so with the multitudes which no man can number, who have been exchanging this world for heaven, down to the present moment. But what renders the circumstance of dying in faith so desirable? What is there in it to change the character of death, ordinarily so gloomy and repulsive?

I would say in reply,—to die in faith is to die *in safety*, to die *rationaly*, to die *with a prospect of coming glory*, and to *leave behind precious consolations* for surviving friends. On each of these particulars let me enlarge.

1. To die in faith is to die *in safety*. Safety is that state in which we are not exposed to harm. Neither death, nor anything subsequent, shall injure the believer. From the physical pangs of dying, it is true, he is no more free than others. But these do not touch his moral condition. They are pains, under the present constitution of things, incident to our removal to another state of being. They pertain to a body which must be thrown off and dissolved. They may be appalling to the believer, as well as others, but not because they throw a single shade over his immortality.

The believer's safety in death is made evident when we reflect on the nature of faith. It forms a bond of union with God, it supposes that peace is made with him through the death of his Son, and consequently that he is no longer an offended judge, but a reconciled Father. Really to *believe*, goes along with repentance; it is the

starting point from which a pious life begins. The believer is therefore in favor with God, and being in favor with him is safe,—safe while he lives, and no less safe at the hour of death. Upon whatever untried scenes he may enter, he is sure of not going beyond the dominion and loving kindness of God. This is enough. Through all his earthly pilgrimage, he found God faithful, and he has promised not to desert him, when flesh and heart shall fail. The language of strong faith is, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for God is with me, his rod and his staff, they shall comfort me.” It is wrong, my brethren, anxiously to inquire in what precise circumstances the departed Christian will exist, what new scenes will press on his attention, how he will apprehend spiritual existence, and be apprehended there. Better leave all that to God. If you depart in faith, be assured no ill shall befall you. Hear God’s own language—“Neither *death*, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ.” If left in the possession of the love of God in Christ, all things are the believer’s, and among these, exemption from every species of evil.

I know the believer does not always *feel* his safety when God is dissolving the frail tenement which confines him to earth. Many a saint has found his contest with remaining unbelief on his death bed, *severe* beyond all former example. For a time, darkness has come over him; the foundation of his hopes seemed to be failing. On the other hand, some have died with hopes to which they had no right;—died presumptuously;—expired with the belief they were the children of God, when utter strangers to

genuine faith. But these instances do not touch the great facts that those who die in faith, die safely ; and that the hypocrite's hope shall perish.

2. Secondly, to die in faith is to die *rationaly*. For an intelligent being to approach the grave and find all darkness and uncertainty beyond, is not to die rationally. The hero may have died firmly ; I will even admit, exultingly. The philosopher perhaps has died calmly ; but their's was not a *rational* death. They died with eyes unopened upon their true condition, and upon God and eternity. With them, too, it was all relinquishment, and no definite hope of acquisition. All the good of which they could conceive, lay behind ; they could rest on nothing before. The most you can say is, death was to them an evil to which they brought themselves manfully to submit. It is impossible to die rationally, unless we can believe God in regard to the reality of a future state, and humbly cast ourselves on him for protection and eternal life. How do you know we are not annihilated the moment we expire ? As to those nicely formed arguments in support of immortality, derived from the light of nature, they may perhaps convince a man who coolly contemplates them in his study. For him who stands trembling as death approaches, they are good for nothing. But the great question respects our condition in eternity. Now the believer knows, on the authority of God, that he shall continue to exist, and he knows that the divine being whom he loves, can be confided in, and will do more for his children than they can ask or even think. To die with this confidence is to die as it becomes a rational being. It is to go through a dark valley indeed,—but to do so, believing there is more than earthly light beyond. It is to

leave behind long loved and cherished friends, but to enter on the possession of infinitely better things. You do not find a believer who dies in comfort, gathering up some little happiness from a world which is fading in his eyes. No ; he is ready to depart. What he has not yet seen, far outshines the loveliest forms on earth. What he relinquishes, is nothing, compared with what he is going to possess.

3. This leads me to remark in the third place, that to die in faith is to die *with a prospect of coming glory*. With the believer it is not merely exemption from ill that is brought by death. He has the recorded promise of Jehovah that glory awaits him ; an unspeakable and everlasting progress in knowledge and holiness. He knows that in heaven there is rest for the people of God ; that sorrow and sighing are done away ; that new delights are ever rising in the soul, as more knowledge of God is gained through eternity. From the moment he began to love God and holy beings, the believer began to delight in the Scripture representations of heaven ; and when coming to the close of life, that heaven is brought within his reach. The very faith by which he confides in all that God has affirmed, and by which he casts himself on the Saviour, assures him that there are mansions above for all who love Christ.

True, the Scriptures do not paint heaven to the eye ; the spirituality of it forbids that. But we know there is nothing to hurt or offend there. We know there is no sin there. We know that manifestations of God and the Saviour, distinct as noon day, are made there. We know that angels, and the general assembly of the church of the first born, reside there, and that with them the believer

will be everlastingly associated. Nay more, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Here on earth, the believer's intercourse with Christ is exceedingly imperfect. He knows in part and believes in part. When faith is *most vigorous*, it can do no more than see through a glass darkly. The spiritually minded Christian desires to see as he is seen, and know as he is known. While in the body he cannot gain satisfactory nearness to the Saviour. But what he so strongly desires, he knows to be in *reserve* for the people of God. Let the body be dropped, and that moment the concealing veil is withdrawn. For this he who dies in faith is waiting, as his pulses become fainter and fewer. To be present with the Lord! Oh, how often have these blessed words fallen sweetly on the pilgrim's ear, when tired of sin, and almost broken with sorrow. He feels that this will be happiness and glory. The thought of this, when viewed as distant, has often cheered him. It has broken in upon his darker hours, and shed around him broad gleams of sunshine. And now that he is going to die, and is dying in faith—how glorious the prospect as he is just falling into the Saviour's arms!

The apostle John gives us a delightful view of the glory in prospect of which the believer dies. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not appear what we *shall be*; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Here is nothing to gratify a prying curiosity respecting the particular mode of existence, and employments, and pleasures of glorified saints. It merely says, if we die in faith, we shall ever after be like God. Now to one who loves God supremely, this conveys the liveliest idea of spiritual glory.

What more can he ask than to be like his heavenly Father? Heretofore it has been his great burden that he was so unlike him. He has *sought* to be holy as God is holy. He has prayed, and resisted temptation, and fought with sin, that he might resemble him. But how exceedingly little has he done in this blessed work, even with the gospel in his hands, and the good Spirit of God to aid him. How often has Satan gained advantage over him? how often has his wicked heart deceived him, and the world in some new form thrown its chains about him? How often has he mourned over languid affections, and heartless desires, and spiritual sloth? In all these things he has exhibited the very opposite of likeness to God. But when departing hence in faith, he is on the eve of dropping every sin and imperfection, and ever after being like God. He is going to possess what he has sighed for, and panted after. Were there nothing else to cheer in the believer's death, we might fill our eye with this, and say, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.

4. I proceed to say, fourthly, they who die in faith *leave behind precious consolation for surviving friends*. Even among those where it is no more than conjectured that the soul survives the body, we see a disposition to consider the dead as merely removed to another scene, where they live, and think, and enjoy. Human nature is slow to take up the melancholy conclusion that the animating spirit is no more after the body becomes cold and motionless. Where the light of revelation shines, men are taught to think, from early childhood, that when the mortal part is laid in the grave, the soul has already winged its way to God. That same revelation assures us, that future felicity is confined to the penitent and believ-

ing. When those we love die in faith we have the consoling, the animating assurance that they are inhabitants of a better world. There is sorrow in our hearts, that we shall see their faces no more ; but we would not bring them back to this troubled world. We would not pluck them from the constellations where they shine to the glory of God—we would not have them break off in the songs of the ransomed which their voices are just beginning to raise. Perhaps there is nothing here below which has more of heaven in it, than when believers reckon up their pious friends who have died in the Lord, and follow them in thought to the paradise above. There they rest from their labors. There no sin pollutes, no cares distress, no dangers alarm. There they are unspeakably happy in the company of pure spirits and the intimate fellowship of Christ. For many who toil in this world, heaven is rather their home than earth. Their earliest and best friends have gone thither already. Their friends they love with a *consecrated* affection. Now they are inmates of heaven ; and instead of mourning for them as those who have no hope, they anticipate the period of blessed re-union, where there is no sin to mar, and no death to interrupt their friendship.

Surely, my hearers, to look no farther into this subject, it is blessed to die in faith. Death, to whomsoever it comes, is majestic. To be removed by a resistless power from the scene of all our actual observations and experimental knowledge,—to throw off the body, apart from which we know not what existence is,—to have new inlets of knowledge, new perceptions, new joys or new sufferings.—There is majesty in it. There is nothing in this world so bright as not to fade by the side of death.—

Nothing so high as not to become insignificant. Thus has it always seemed to enlightened and reflecting minds. In the believer's death there is a mixture of sublimity and loveliness, which nothing on earth can reach. Behold him as the moment of his departure draws nearer and nearer. Here is a body in which dissolution has already begun. Around him are beloved friends, no more to be seen in the flesh. He treads on the last foot of ground which remains, and before him lies an untraversed and boundless ocean. And yet that blessed principle, faith, is all this time sustaining him. He trusts in an invisible God, and feels that he is going where he will know him better, and love him more. There is full confidence in a Saviour, whom he never has seen, but in whom *believing*, he can even now rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I will venture to say, no man in his senses, not even the most hardened, can stand at the bed of a departing saint unimpressed. At the *time*, he will feel the vanity of the world, and the peace and blessedness of faith. It is impossible to despise the believer's death. There are those who can despise his life, esteeming it tame and spiritless, and unblessed with the honors of the world—but about his death, there gathers a glory, which the very profane acknowledge and feel. My hearers, when the truths of God's word are brought before you, and you are exhorted to make your peace with God by faith in his Son, think of death—think how death is stripped of its terrors, nay, more, how glorious it is when it comes to a believer.—And oh, think of a faithless death—of being torn from the world, with undefined and fearful anticipations of coming misery. If we thought more of dying, we should not be insensible to the messages of peace and pardon which a

gracious God is sending us. Profitable indeed are the lessons taught by death.

My brethren, this subject invites us all to consider most carefully our preparation for death. Are we ready to die? I do not say, shall we be ready within a year, a month, a week? Are we ready now? Who of us would not turn pale, should the summons come this moment? It is not enough that we have some evidence that we love and serve God, and therefore conclude, if this be true, death would open our way to heaven. Such a state is full of danger, for it throws fearful uncertainty over the great question, whether or not, we are the children of God. Something more is required of us, than to be *essentially* prepared for death. Our preparation ought to be special. We may be essentially prepared, that is, we may have been really born again, and yet be without that readiness to die which constitutes freedom from bondage. It is the believer's privilege to be always in that state of special preparation for his departure, which ensures peace and triumph on a dying bed. But for this, my brethren, we must live up to a high standard of Christian character. It must be a subject of our daily prayers, and be our daily aim to attain a stronger and more steady faith. Our doubts must be examined, and their causes sought, and the whole difficulty be carried to God. The subject of death must be daily and deliberately revolved in our minds. We must seek opportunities to be alone with God, and delight in communing with him. We must contend against that destroyer of modern religion, a worldly spirit. While mingling with the world, we must see a hand they cannot see, and hear a voice they cannot hear. While it is said of the ancient saints, to whom our text alludes,

that they died in faith, it is likewise said, they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And so must we. We enjoy a fuller revelation and better promises than they; but we cannot die in faith unless we lead essentially the same life with them. Amid all the temporal bounties a gracious God may bestow, we must still be strangers and pilgrims here. This is no place for us to take up our rest. It is indeed Immanuel's land. But it is a distant province which we are marching through, to brighter worlds on high. Let us fix our eyes on the city that hath foundation whose builder and maker is God; on the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Death will try us, and death is at hand. Whether we pass through this world in a path a little more or a little less smooth, a little more or a little less thorny, matters nothing. But when we lay us down to die, shall we rest safely in God's precious promises? Will the Saviour be with us, to calm our solicitude and to receive our departing spirits? I pray God it may be so. I pray God we may die in faith; that when we are absent from the body we may be present with the Lord.

VALEDICTORY ORATION,

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INFLUENCE OF LITERATURE UPON MORAL CHARACTER.

It cannot be denied, even upon a superficial view of the human mind, that we have from nature a moral as well as an intellectual capacity. The judgments which mankind pass upon principles and actions, involving moral relations, while they evince the fallibility, at the same time proclaim the existence of such a constitution. It is true, the decisions from this source, upon the most interesting subject of inquiry, are wholly unsatisfactory ; the light which it casts, is but a faint glimmering ; and its promptings to duty are uncertain. Still we are constrained to believe, that there is in man a discriminating taste of moral excellence ; and that there are sensibilities, which are awakened by moral beauty ; and which become in the benevolent and enlightened mind, the active spring, and zealous guardian of virtue.

It is to this constitution, likewise, we are indebted for our high place in the order of creation. If our species be

considered merely as possessing those powers which are enumerated among the intellectual faculties ; the distinction between man, and the creation around him, is one rather of degree than of kind. But contemplate him as a subject of moral government, as distinguishing what is virtuous, and thus accountable for his actions—and we discern his pre-eminence ; we comprehend his elevated views and aspiring desires ; he bears the stamp of Deity—the image of his Creator.

Between all the faculties of the soul, and their respective exercises, there is an intimate connexion, and a reciprocal influence. From an erroneous principle or opinion will arise corrupt sentiment, and errors in practice ; while by a moral defect, the boasted power of reason is bewildered, and lost in darkness. Indeed, scarce an exercise of mind is so purely intellectual, as not to draw after it a train of moral consequences ; and even the subordinate faculty of imagination is seldom awakened, but to promote the cause of virtue, or diminish the abhorrence of vice.

From these considerations, we infer the important influence, which literature, and literary pursuits must have upon moral character ; and the object proposed is to illustrate this influence, both in its evil and good effects.

A mind, the least accustomed to speculation, cannot for a moment doubt how deeply the moral condition of man is involved in the success of sound philosophy. From a single error, long admitted as an elementary principle in the science of mind, the great skeptic of England could deduce legitimate conclusions, which tended to confound every moral distinction, and which actually cast over the interests of virtue and religion a temporary gloom. It is true, in this age of liberal inquiry, we have little to fear

from scholastic absurdity, and metaphysical subtleties. To us, they are the volcano, raging harmlessly at a distance, but which we view with the reflection, that there was a time, when this convulsion of nature laid waste in its progress all that was useful, and beautiful, and grand in the works of man.

But it is upon those fascinating works, which more properly constitute the literature of a nation, that the moralist *now* has occasion to look with the most suspicion. Corrupt sentiment may be so wove into the history, the poem, and the fiction, as to gain a ready admission to the heart, and almost insensibly destroy its purity; and the delighted reader is unwilling to believe, that from the same source, whence his imagination has been awakened—yea, some of the best feelings of the heart brought into exercise—a blow is aimed at a part of his character, at once the most susceptible and important. It is this silent but powerful influence we fear—an influence, which is effected by the union of impiety with whatever is captivating and truly excellent. Is the poison the less to be dreaded because mingled with the purest viands?—or would you visit with less apprehension the abode of the outlaw, because blessed with a serene sky, and a pure atmosphere, and decorated with whatever is beautiful in nature? In the perusal of the Roman classics, the scholar first finds himself delighted with the sparklings of genius. Here his taste is formed for the refinements of literature; here the first flowers of fancy bloom. Is it wonderful, then, that the ardent youth should receive with little hesitation the morality of the Augustine age? Is it wonderful, that at the same time he contracts a fondness for poetry, and a love of nature, his habitual thoughts should

be haunted with the graces of a heathen mythology, and his bosom glow with admiration of those splendid but bloody exploits, which made Rome the unhallowed mistress of the world ?

The highest efforts of genius—those which most effectually chain the mind, are found to owe their principal effect to the moral interest they excite. This may be the pure stream which flows from the mountains, or the stagnant pool of a sultry clime, of which the traveller drinks and dies. The admiring reader is exposed from the very nature of the emotions of taste. These so far from arising from any independent cause, result from the combined force of interesting associations ; and thus it is, that a sentiment, against which, in its plain form, the thoughts would revolt, becomes sanctified by the pure idea with which it is blended. When the soul is elevated far above its usual tone of feeling, when the imagination is following the poet through the charms of ideal existence ; it is no time to examine the influence of associated causes ; the effect is one ; and the pure air, and the noxious vapor is inhaled at the same breath.

It cannot be doubted that the cause of pure morality has much to fear from the popular productions of our age. What virtuous mind can contemplate, without secret dread, the captivating works of a writer like Moore, whose exquisite poetry, and fine sensibility, combined as they are with an elegant voluptuousness, find an easy access to the susceptible heart, and efface those moral distinctions, and obliterate those moral feelings, which form so important a part of our nature. His tender allusions, the harmony of his numbers, and the profusion and sparkling character of his oriental imagery—all conspire to

form one stream of pleasure insensibly stealing upon the soul, but often leaving behind it the marks of impurity. His poetry reminds us of one of his own eastern valleys,

“Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine,”

—but the venomous reptile lurks beneath the bed of roses, and the breeze of evening, which comes loaded with perfume, bears with it also the elements of disease.

But the influence which fine poetry may be made to have in perverting the moral feelings, is still more forcibly illustrated in the numerous productions of an author, whose bold and eccentric powers, not more than his interesting and romantic character, have made him the favorite of the public, and the boast of modern genius. His more forcible passages are such as both allure and overpower the mind; and the sway he thus gains, is employed in infusing into the soul his own dark views, and throwing around it a gloom, under whose influence every mild and amiable sentiment dies. If he ever stoops from his proud misanthropy to excite some tender emotion—to record the lingering beauty of ancient Greece, it is only that he may the more effectually ascend among his native storms. His force of expression, his agony of feeling, and more than all, his stern alienation from mankind, is the scene of a lofty and barren mountain; we acknowledge its sublimity; but it is a sublimity which abandons it, when the hand of cultivation exerts its transforming power, when the flower blooms, and the fruits wave on its summit.

But if literature may be made to have this prejudicial effect upon morals, it is obvious, that upon the same principle, it may become a no less powerful instrument in the

cause of virtue, and the noblest efforts of genius all be rendered subservient to moral improvement. Literature cannot indeed wipe away that native stain, which adheres to the character of man, as well among the refinements of cultivated society, as in a state of unlettered barbarism; still it may be made to invigorate our moral perceptions; it may be made to strengthen and cherish all our moral sensibilities. Abstracting from the influence of literary pursuit in enlarging the mind; and thus rendering its views upon moral subjects at once more accurate and comprehensive—is it possible to doubt, that those productions, which address themselves to the imagination, may give the heart a bias in favor of truth, and engage its prepossessions on the side of virtue? The philosophy of mind does not illustrate a more beautiful fact than this, that the same constitution, to which we are indebted for the refined pleasures of taste, is thus capable of ennobling and improving our moral sentiments. It is eminently in the power of the poet to arrest the usual current of thought; to fix the mind with intenseness upon subjects of an interesting and elevated character; and when disgusted with this world of imperfection, to feast it upon scenes of ideal excellence. If, in those moments of deep excitement, the associations he awakens are pure; if his intellectual combinations are such as not only delight the imagination, but call forth the virtuous affections, can he thus touch the soul, without tending to promote a healthful tone of moral feeling? Can you inhale the soft breath of spring, and feel no thrill of joy? Can you witness the desolating blasts of winter, and find no secret impulse to solemn thought?

Where a taste for works of imagination is united with

a truly benevolent disposition, their influence upon moral character is still more important and salutary. In the individual who unites these qualities, the emotions of taste tend directly to promote a religious end, and become blended with the effusions of piety. He may be led by the poet into the beautiful of the works of God, to admire his character, and reverence his laws; and thus a cord may be touched upon whose vibrations the author of his existence can look down with complacency. It is a pleasing reflection, that as the cause of virtue and religion advances, there will be a corresponding improvement in the character of our literary productions. Yea, we may look forward to the period, when literature and religion shall flow in the same channel, and when this stream thus constituted, shall visit with its pure waters all orders of society, and pour upon our world the accumulated blessings of intellectual refinement, moral rectitude, and true happiness.

THE ADDRESS.

There are various considerations, my class-mates, which render this day one of the most interesting we shall ever know. While witnessing the closing scene of our collegiate course, and having in full prospect the more active duties of life, it is natural—it is what the occasion requires, to pause and reflect. As to any feelings, which may be excited by the thought, that we are together for the last time, I have no wish to make them a topic of remark. Though we hail this day with pleasure, and congratulate ourselves upon its arrival, we all doubtless feel, that it witnesses the rupture of some of those ties, which it is at once our nature and our happiness to know.

The academical education we now close, has conferred upon us certain privileges, which belong to comparatively few. Those principles and opinions, which go so far in forming the character, we may approach, and revolve, and scrutinize in the light of philosophy ; and we have felt, too, in a degree, the influence of scientific and literary pursuits, in enlarging, and refining, and liberalizing the mind. But while we grant to literature and philosophy all their importance, it is impossible not to feel, that their influence upon the character of man is but partial and unsatisfactory. The light which philosophy casts upon subjects of surpassing interest, is but the faint and ever varying illumination of the north, or the occasional and eccentric flashing of the evening cloud. But upon us has arisen the Sun of Righteousness. Let me barely add, it is to the Christian religion we are indebted for those weighty motives—for those sublime truths—those dear hopes—which calm the fevered mind, and fit it for more elevated joys above.

We have doubtless made it a subject of thought, that we are to enter upon active life, at a period of no common interest. Ours is emphatically the day of active benevolence ; and we are invited, whatever be our situations, to join in the sacred enterprize of improving the intellectual and moral condition of man. It is no time to indulge in dreams of greatness—to pursue the phantoms of personal honor and emolument. It is no time to repose beneath the bowers of inglorious ease—to loiter away life, in that soft shade, where every prominent and manly virtue withers. Let us then leave this scene of preparatory study, to diffuse happiness around us, by disseminating the principles of benevolence and peace.

It is impossible on an occasion like this, but we should feel, with peculiar force, the debt of gratitude we owe our Instructors. They have more than our esteem—more than our mere respect. To them flow the warmer feelings of the heart—and to them belong too, what is infinitely more valuable, the approbation of Heaven.

During our collegiate course, as a class, and as individuals, our blessings have been great. Death has not selected from our number, nor has protracted disease chilled the ardor of our hopes. Often, I doubt not, when the soul sinks beneath its burdens, will our thoughts revert with peculiar interest to these years of calm and peaceful seclusion. They are associated in our minds with a separation from the fashionable follies of life, with the elevated pursuits of literature, and the expansion of our faculties. Though our intimate connexion is now to be dissolved, yet, if guided by the dictates of benevolence, and influenced by the spirit of our holy religion, there will be a striking sense in which we shall be united. We shall share in the same fears, in the same hopes and joys; and we shall receive the benefactions of a common Father. Possessed of this character, it is of little consequence to us, how soon that solemn hour shall come, when the shades of evening collect around the senses, and the heart is still in death. Yea, when the scenes of this transitory life shall have faded from our view, we shall meet in a fairer and a brighter world than this—in a region of immortality and peace. With this hope—this joyous hope, we will separate; and now, as the last moment has arrived, permit me to bid you a long *farewell*.

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